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# RAY OF LIGHT.

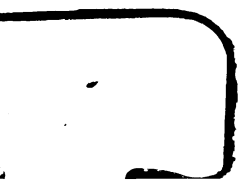
By the Author of  
**"A TRAP TO CATCH A SUNBEAM," ETC.**

"Rebuke then, if thou wilt rebuke,—but neither hastily nor harshly.  
 Or, if thou wilt commend, be it honestly, of right; I work for God and good."  
*TUPPER'S Proverbial Philosophy.*

  
 **New York:**  
**ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,**  
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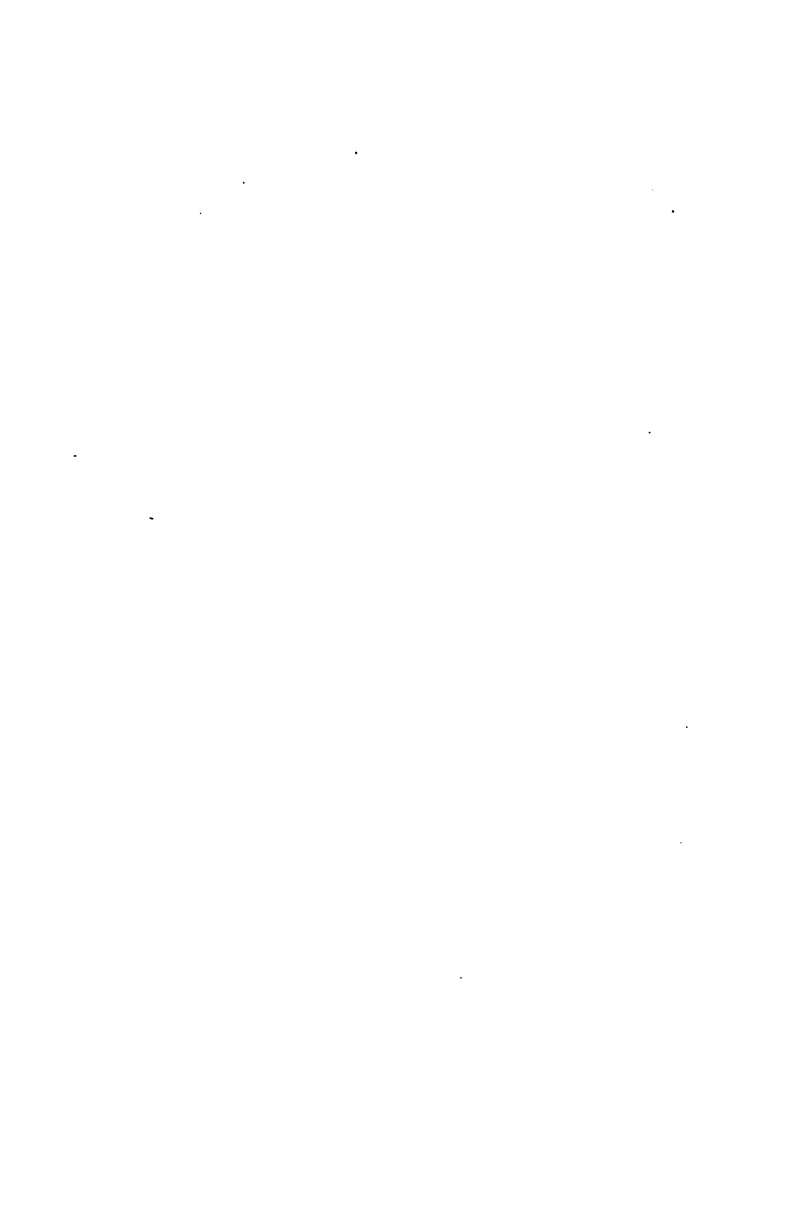
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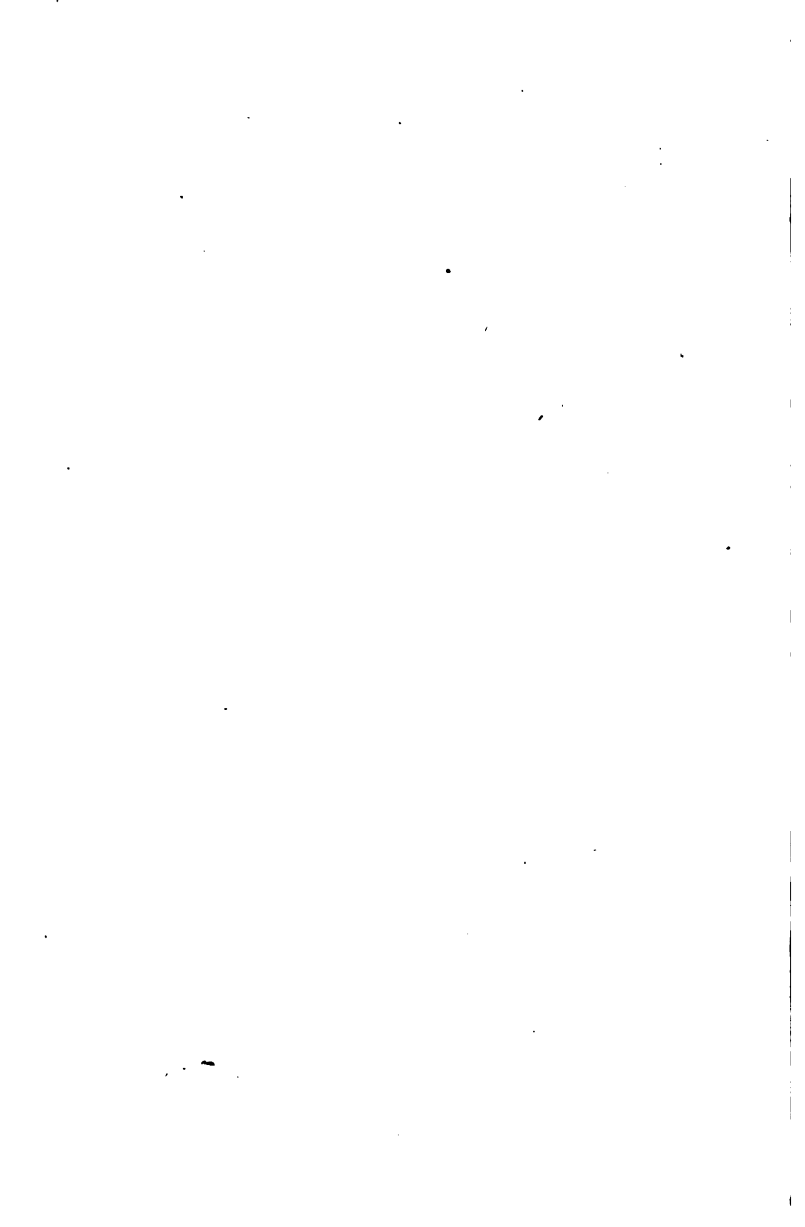


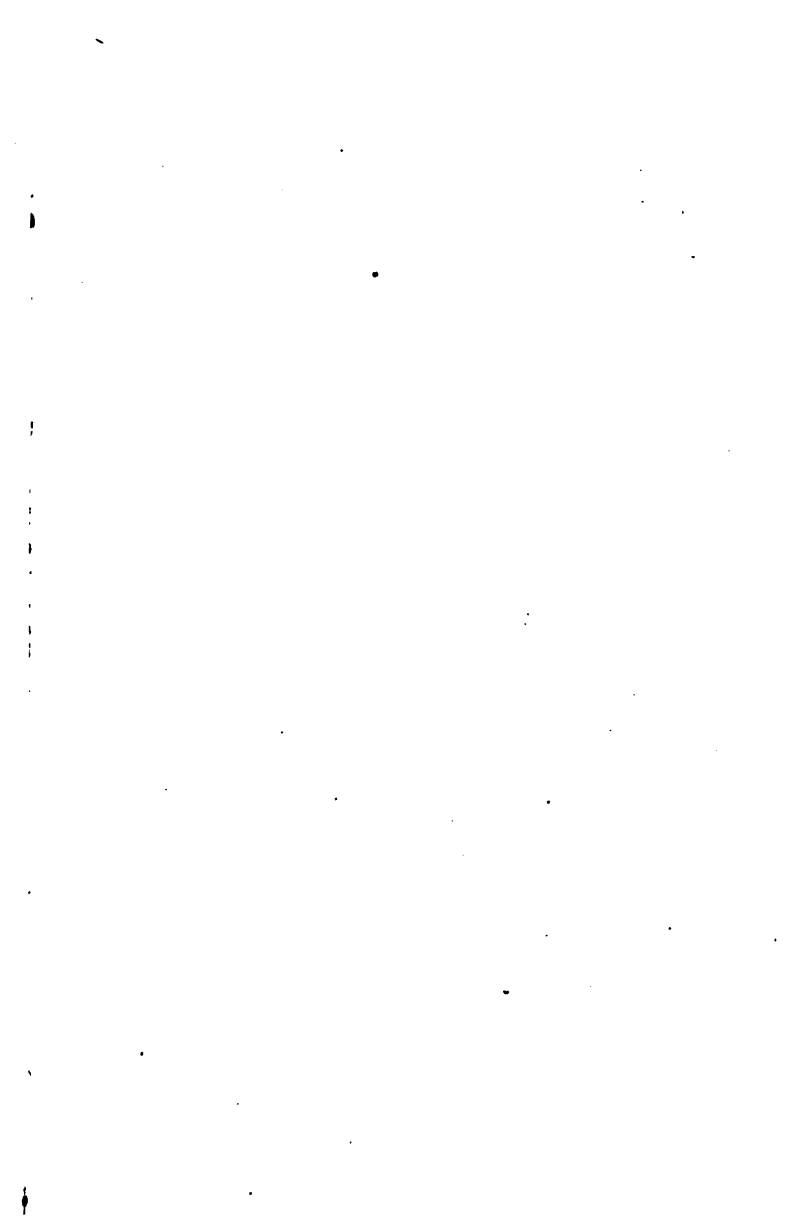


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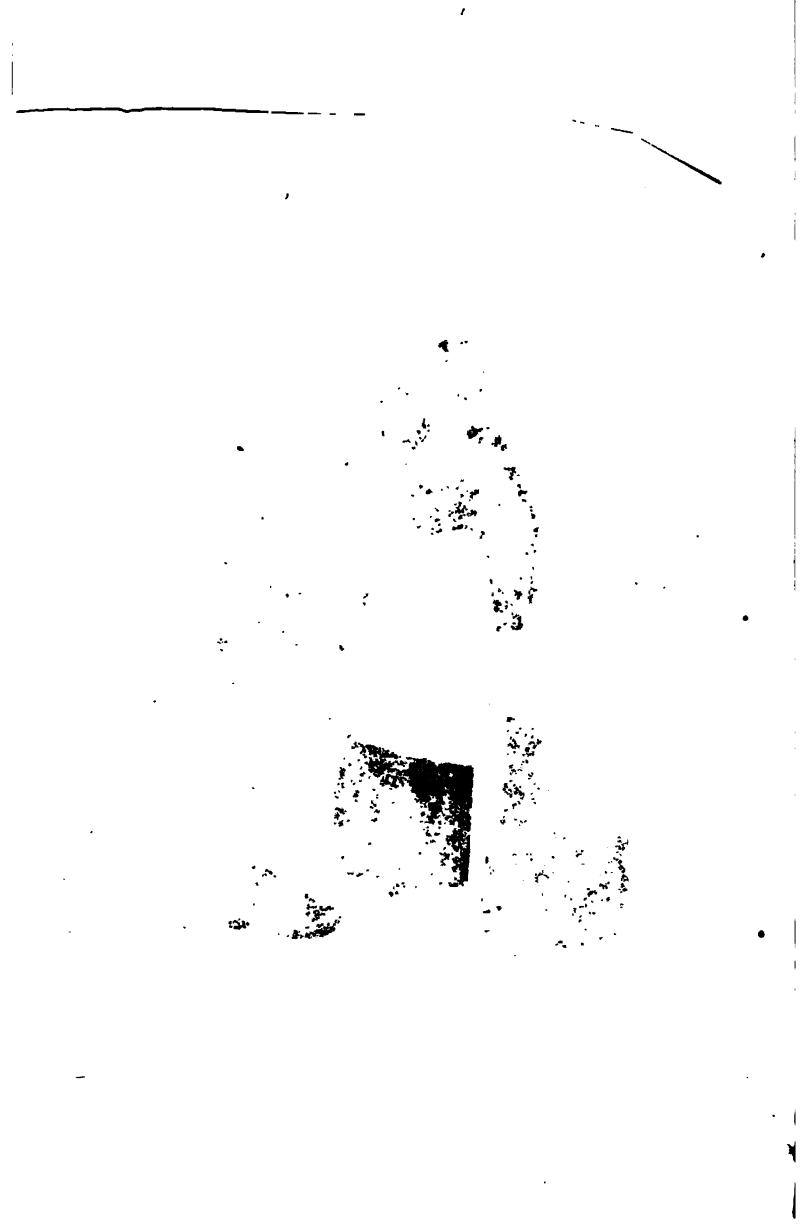












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# A RAY OF LIGHT.

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## CHAPTER I.


"Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all."—  
Proverbs, xxxi. 29.

THE shades of evening are falling on the pretty little village of Wetherley, gradually enveloping in a soft, shadowy mist the distant landscape, and causing the old ivy-crowned church-tower to look larger and darker in the fading light, and the forge-fire to seem brighter and blaze higher; and so stealthily the light fades, that one can scarcely see how every moment steals a ray away and leads the darkness on.

How still it is! The tired labourers are all home, some smoking at their cottage-doors, some working a little in their gardens, the children are mostly all asleep, the birds at roost and the sheep folded, and silence and repose seem keeping guard over the little peaceful village.



The sun has sunk to rest some hours ago, and yet surely he has left behind him some of his radiance, or what can make old Peter Ray's cottage so bright when you enter it? There are certainly no wax candles, nor tallow ones either burning; no fire either, for it is too warm; but a face and form are there which would make sunlight in any home. The light from a true heart is shining in those soft grey eyes, and in the glad smile which parts the lips so often; but it is no beauty, no lovely young girl who is thus the sunshine of her old parents' home. No, Millicent Ray had no beauty but the beauty of goodness; and she is not young,—some thirty summers have passed over her head, and the young things of seventeen call Millicent an old maid. She is not frightened at the sound; she calls herself so, glancing very archly though all the while at some one who, on many summer's evenings beneath their rose-covered porch, or on winter nights by the wood-fire, has always a seat next Millicent; some one who, when she takes her well-laden basket to the neighbouring town with her eggs and butter for sale, manages so often to be coming home, at the same hour, and who always happens to come out of church at the same moment, which is a great comfort to poor old Mrs. Ray, for she exchanges the feeble arm of her old husband for the strong one of Philip Hartley.



On this still summer evening of which I have spoken, Millicent sits beneath the porch working, while the old folks are dozing in their respective arm-chairs. A smile—that bright, glad smile, which so often brightened Millicent's features, plays round her mouth now as her fingers move nimbly at her task, and every now and then she peeps into the room to see if the old people are awake and ready for their supper. Some little time has passed since she first took her seat there amongst the roses and honeysuckles, and the light has faded so that she can no longer see to stitch that wristband to her fancy; so she lays her work aside and rests her head among the sweet-scented blossoms which grow so thickly over the old porch, and in a pleasant, dreamy silence watches the sun go down, and the smile still rests upon the lips it seems loth to leave, for glad and happy thoughts are in Millicent's mind, and no sad or gloomy ones ever come to frighten the smile away. And yet Millicent's lot is not so very bright a one; she has had to work for her living as long as she can recollect; her parents are aged and infirm, and a great charge to her; the old father can earn but little now, for he is paralysed; she is their main support, and Philip Hartley has loved her, and she has loved Philip these five years, and they are still unmarried; so, you see, she has her trials like all in this world, but she bears them with

the hopeful courage of one who looks beyond the present to a bright future, where she knows there will be no tears nor sorrow any more. She has learnt and believed that "the path of the just is as a shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day," and her life's aim has been to walk in that path. Millicent is thinking in that half light of many things, and amongst them of a young sailor-lad who is now tossing on the bosom of the great deep, and who shares Millicent's large heart with her old father and mother and Philip. This dearly-loved sailor-boy is her only brother, born to his parents late in life, and so considerably younger than Millicent—so much younger, that her love for him was more a mother's than a sister's love; she had washed and dressed him, taught him, and worked for him; and when she found his taste was for the sea, rested not till it was gratified, as she thought no boy could do well in the world unless he pursued the profession he chose and loved; and so she sent him forth with her blessing and followed him with her prayers, and longed for the time when he could get leave and she could press to her heart once more the boy she loved with that strange, earnest, mingled love of mother and sister. The old folks, too, loved their boy so fondly, that Millicent had had a hard matter to persuade them to let him go to sea; but from her earliest childhood she had

possessed a singular influence over her parents, and "Millicent says so," was generally the reason assigned to everything which was done, so her advice was taken at last, and the idolised boy was permitted to embrace the profession he had chosen.

Amongst the many good qualifications which Millicent possessed, was that sense which used to be called *common-sense*, but in these days deserves to be called uncommon, for it is amongst the rarest to be found. The clergyman of the parish where they then resided had taken a fancy to the bright-looking little thing, and had induced her mother to send her, with one or two other village girls, to the Rectory, where his wife took the greatest pains to educate them in those useful household matters which are now being introduced into schools. Finding this mode of instruction seemed to answer, and having numerous applications to receive girls into her class, she, by the aid of the Squire of the place, established a school entirely for this purpose. There the little Millicent, with her earnest desire to learn, and her peculiar tendency to find out a reason for everything she saw done, soon astonished every one by her proficiency; and when at fifteen she left school, having remained there longer than the generality of girls are permitted by their unwise parents, Millicent's general inform-

ation far surpassed that of many, even her superiors in rank of life and advantages. Few could make such bread, butter, and cheese, or rear such poultry, or cook a dinner, to equal Millicent, and "out of nothing," as her mother used to say,—for Millicent, amongst her other qualifications, possessed that admirable one of a thorough knowledge of economy. She wasted nothing; a joint of meat seemed to go twice as far if Millicent had the management of it; and in sick-cookery there was not her equal for miles round. All this made her a most valuable neighbour to the poor of Wetherley, who sent for her to ask advice and assistance on every occasion. On the evening in question she was about to rise from her seat and enter the cottage to get the supper, when a little ragged girl, shuffling with slipshod shoes along the road, stopped before the gate and asked if that was Mrs. Ray's.

"Yes, my dear; what is it?"

"I want Millicent Ray to come down and see our baby," answered the child in a low, drawling tone.

"I am Millicent Ray; is the baby ill?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know! what did you want me to see the baby for then?"

"Mother sent me."

"Well, but, my dear child, if the baby is not ill I do not think I can come, because I have many things to do at home."

"Mother said I was to run down the street and find Mrs. Ray's, and ask Millicent to come up to see baby directly."

"Then I suppose it is ill; is it crying?"

"Oh! yes, dreadful."

"But you are a stranger to me; are you newcomers?"

"No; we only comed yesterday."

Millicent smiled as she answered, "I should call that newly-come; however, tell me your name and where you live, and then run home and say I will come as soon as I can."

"Very well," said the girl, turning slowly away.

"But you have not told me your name nor where you live."

"Our name be Ward, and we lives at the first of them houses by the mill."

"Very well, I will be there,—I think I may say as soon as you," said Millicent, smiling again as the child, with a lagging step, moved towards the gate; "but you had better try and get home quickly, for if baby is ill you may be useful to your mother;" thus saying, Millicent entered the cottage, and in a few

moments set the supper, and, eating a piece of crust only herself, prepared to go out and visit the sick baby.

"What, some one want you as usual, my darling," said her old mother, looking up with a loving glance in the face of her good child.

"Yes, dear mother; but I shall be as quick as I can, and if there is not much the matter I daresay I shall be back before you have finished supper,—at any rate, time enough to light your pipe, father. Good-bye for the present."

"Bless that girl! she be on the trot from morning till night and night till morning, I do declare."

"So she be, father; but what is it for, to do some good to some one allays; now ain't it, father?" answered the old woman.

"Umph; well, yes, I spose so; but I can't bear my meals without her."

"Well it ain't so pleasant-like, I'll own, but I always tries to think that as God has been pleased to grant us such a child, we ought to show our gratitude by encouraging her in making all the use she can of herself. I don't know if I rightly make myself understood, but what I mean to say is this,—seeing as she has got more sense like than others, why she ought to use it in the service of Him who gave it."

"Ah! true, mother, true; she is a right good girl and a blessing to us."

"And to all who know her," chimed in the doting mother; "and may God reward her!"

While the fond parents are thus descanting on the merits of their child, she is hastening to the cottage where her services appear to be required. She knew the inhabitants of all the cottages in the row but one, and therefore felt sure that that must be the Wards'; it bore a desolate and untidy appearance, but Millicent thought that having only just arrived they had not got their place into order. She knocked at the door, and the little girl, who had come to fetch her, opened it.

"Shall I come in?" asked Millicent, as the child stood staring at her.

"Yes, please," said a voice from within; and Millicent entered the room. It seemed comfortless enough; but it was too dark to see much or make out the faces of its occupants, which consisted of a woman and man and an older girl than the one who had fetched Millicent. She, the former, was racing up and down the room with a child in her arms, between two or three months old, whose constant screams, added to the singing of the girl—who appeared trying to shout down the baby—prevented anything like conversation being heard.



"Is this the baby you want me to see?" asked Millicent.

"Yes, if you please; she's been all on screaming like that this two hours, and I can't think what ails her."

"Give her to me, my dear," said Millicent to the girl, who held the poor little screaming thing; and taking it tenderly in her arms, Millicent held it up to her chest, and cuddling the little hands and face up in her neck began to rock it backwards and forwards very gently. In a few moments the screams grew less violent, and sunk at last into a low, complaining cry; still Millicent kept on the rocking, accompanying it, now that the screams had ceased, with a low soothing song, till finally the poor worn-out little creature fell asleep.

"There, Mrs. Ward," said Millicent, "you see there is nothing very much the matter, or your little one would not have gone to sleep."

The woman, who had stared at Millicent in bewilderment at seeing her child so soon quieted, exclaimed,

"Well! I never! but what have you done to it then?"

"Why, you see all I have done—simply given her warmth and comfort, and soothed instead of irritated her. She was troubled with some little ailment

which made her restless in the first instance, and then fanning her up and down the room and making her more cold increased her discomfort, the loud singing irritated her still more, and if some quieting plan had not been tried, you would have had a great deal of trouble with her; but she has a distressed expression about her face," continued Millicent, for the man had risen and lighted a candle, so that she could see the poor little wan face lying on her bosom; "do you suckle her or feed her?"

"Why, both, bless you. She don't have half enough from me, she don't never seem satisfied,—it's crying from morning to night."

"Then she can't be quite well, Mrs. Ward."

"Well, I don't know as anything ails her; she eats well enough."

"What food do you give her?"

"Oh, anything, same as we ourselves."

"Then I certainly don't wonder at her crying," answered Millicent: "how old is she?"

"Turned of four months."

"Is she really? she is very small, poor dear child! As you have sent for me, I suppose you don't mind my giving my opinion; and so I must tell you that you are very wrong in letting this child have anything yet but milk and water, and even that I should scarcely think is wanted; but if you really find

that you have not enough to supply her, pray give her only milk and water."

"But milk and water warn't satisfy her, bless you. I've got a plenty; but it don't satisfy her: so why should milk and water—poor stuff like that?"

"Well, will you let me try?" said Millicent, smiling again and giving up the argument, knowing by long experience how fruitless it was. "You fetch a little new milk from Watman's in the morning, and give her one wine-glass full of milk and two of water, sweetened with white sugar: but she must have some medicine first. If you will let your little girl come back with me now, I will send you some. As soon as baby rouses, give her the medicine, and then nurse her; but do not give her any other kind of food, pray, until the morning, and then try the milk and water, if she really does not appear satisfied."

"Yes; give her the physic as soon as it comes."

"If she is awake, but do not wake her on any account. She will not sleep long, for I can see she looks uneasy. What food has she had to-day?"

"Well, she had some of our pudding—suet-pudding; she's uncommon fond of that."

"It's a miracle you don't choke her."

"Oh! bless you, I only gives her little mites, dipped in sugar; but it seems to be more feeding-like than milk—such poor stuff!"

"Don't you think, Mrs. Ward, that God knows best what is the right food for the little ones He blesses us with, and has He not ordained that the mother should provide for the wants of her baby until it has teeth to eat with? Therefore, when through any misfortune the mother cannot supply this food, the safest way is to imitate it as close as possible; but however, I must not stay and talk any longer now, let your little girl come with me for the medicine, will you? and in the meanwhile keep this poor baby as warm as possible."

"Run on, Anna, then," said Mrs. Ward, "and look sharp back again."

"Yes," said the father gruffly; "thee'd best not be gone so long as most times, or thou'lt come by a hiding, I'll promise thee."

The girl made no answer, but reaching down from a nail in the wall a dirty and much-torn bonnet, prepared to follow Millicent.

The old folks had finished their suppers before she returned, but her father was waiting for his pipe; so having despatched the girl with the medicine, she filled and lighted her father's pipe, and taking out her work, prepared herself to sit beside him while he smoked.

"Oh! by the bye, here's a note for you, my dear; t came just as you started," said her mother; "from the Vicarage, I think."

"Yes, it is, mother," said Millicent, as she perused the short note, which ran as follows:—

"Mrs. Ponsonby will feel much obliged to Millicent Ray if she can make it convenient to call at the Vicarage any time before two o'clock to-morrow."

"What can she want with you?" asked old Ray, taking his pipe from his mouth and puffing forth a volume of smoke.

"Well, I don't know, father; to make acquaintance with me, I suppose. I have not seen her yet, but I met the new Vicar yesterday, and a very handsome gentleman he is too. I hear she is very pretty, but in very delicate health."

"Maybe she's heard how clever you be in doctoring, my dear," said her mother.

"I should say she knows quite as much as I do, and more too, dear mother, besides having doctors enough to tell her what to do. My doctoring is only for those who can't afford to pay a wiser person."

"What art making, lass?" asked her father; "finery for the fair?"

Millicent laughed heartily as she answered, holding up her work,

"Not finery, and not for the fair, dear father. Neither more nor less than an old gown which has been twice turned--turned again for a petticoat against the

cold weather comes. I very much begrudge, mother, that gown I gave Sarah Holdman the other day; for I saw her in it to-day in such a state—only fit for the dungheap; it would have made me a much better petticoat than this, for it had only been turned once.”

“Oh! my dear, she did not know how to turn things to account as you do. I am sure your bonnet—your best Sunday one, I mean—made out of so many odd pieces—would astonish some folk, and I’m sure there ain’t a prettier one in all the village.”

“Dear mother, you think everything I do and say is right; it’s a wonder you haven’t spoilt me. If I had been worth spoiling, I think I must have been before now,” said Millicent, laughing. “But, see! I have not spoilt my petticoat, have I?” she continued, holding it up for her mother to see. “I declare it looks well enough for a gown now!”

“Almost as good as when Mrs. Thornby gave it me.”

“It do, I declare, my dear! What have you done to it to make it look so nice?”

“Why, picked it all to pieces first, then cleaned the breadths with the water in which I boiled our potatoes, and ironed it while damp on the wrong side. Then Mrs. Thornby gave me the other day, amongst a lot of old things, a dirty lining to a dress that I have washed and starched, and put in it; and so you

see, with a little pains, set myself up with a first-rate winter petticoat. I shall quite long for a muddy day to hold up my things and show it."

"Thee'd best have no gownd at all, lass, I think."

"Well, if it wasn't for the sake of warmth, father, I need not. That is the best of black silk; it looks good to the very last. But now your pipe is out, and I think it's time for decent folks to be in bed."

"Well, I'm ready; are you, missis?"

"Yes, father. You can read for us, can't you?"

"Oh, yes, to be sure;" and the large well-worn Bible was opened, and the old man read a chapter in his tremulous tones, and then a short prayer, which, as usual, he always ended with "God bless and keep them at sea;" to which an earnest Amen was spoken by his hearers, and the trio went quietly to bed.

With the first morning light, Millicent was up, for it was her day for churning, and she liked to have her butter made up before it grew too hot; this, with the pig and chickens to feed, occupied her amply till breakfast-time, which she wished to get quickly out of the way to-day, for she must be off to town to sell her butter and eggs, and back again before two o'clock to go to the Vicarage. But Millicent was never in a bustle; she managed her work with so much method and regularity, and was so particular in keeping everything in its place, that she was never delayed by having to hunt for anything, for Millicent considered that

economy in time was quite as needful as economy in money. She had been early impressed with the belief that our time is not our own,—that each moment of our life is lent us for some wise purpose, and that for every moment needlessly wasted account must be rendered. Well would it be if all could give as good an account as she will be able to render, of constant usefulness to her fellow-creatures and consistent service of her God. Millicent was no heroine; there was nothing outwardly to distinguish her from many of her class; but all her virtues might be summed up in one,—she did her “duty in that station of life into which God had called her.” There is no form of self-examination better or more comprehensive than this. Masters and servants, husbands and wives, children and parents, ask yourselves this question; and if you can answer it as Millicent could, your consciences will be as light and easy as hers.



## CHAPTER II.

**"Cursed is wealth when it falls to the share  
Of the groping dotard or selfish heir ;  
But wisely scatter the talents ye hold,  
And blessings shall fall on the Spirit of Gold."**

*ELIZA COOK'S Poems.*

THE Vicarage of Wetherly was nothing better than a rambling old farm-house, but the present incumbent had married an heiress, and was therefore enabled greatly to improve and adorn the house and grounds, which had many capabilities, and only needed money well laid out to make it a charming place. This suited the taste of Mr. Ponsonby far better than if he had found a residence which required no altering ; to plant and build, alter and contrive, was the greatest possible amusement to him ; and all his leisure time he might be seen directing his workmen and often assisting them. A never-failing hopefulness and untiring energy were amongst Mr. Ponsonby's characteristics. Nothing he liked better than a difficulty ; and what would have daunted the courage and damped the

spirits of many others, only seemed to exhilarate his, and urge him on to fresh exertion. What he wished for he believed he could obtain; and rested not till countless disappointments proved to him it was not to be. His joyous temper, kindly nature, and affectionate disposition, made him a favourite with all. But to say that his wife loved him, conveys but a faint impression of the depth of devotion felt for him by the girl who had married him against the wishes of her friends, who considered that the property she possessed should purchase for her a much higher estate than the humble one of a clergyman's wife. But Edith took a very different view of the position,—she thought there could be no higher station; and to assist with her money the endeavours of him she loved, and to take care of the flock intrusted to him, she considered the most enviable thing in the world; and mildly, but firmly, she resisted the opposition of her aunt and uncle, who had the charge of her (for Edith was an orphan), and as soon as she was of age, married Edward Ponsonby, and went away to the small village of Wetherly and the humble Vicarage-house as proudly happy as though a palace waited to receive her. The only drawback to their matrimonial felicity was her extremely delicate health; but with his usual sanguine temperament—Mr. Ponsonby believed that in time the country air, and the care and love he lavished on her, would

perfectly restore her; and though, poor thing! she only left the sofa to go round the garden in an invalid chair, he still hoped on, and the joyous smile still played on his lips and gave encouragement and fresh spirits to his drooping wife.

About one o'clock on the morning that Millicent was expected, Mrs. Ponsonby was lying on her couch by the open window, while her husband was busily employed directing the gardener where to place some standard roses; his anxiety was to get them exactly where she could see them from her couch, for everything he did had a view to her comfort and amusement.

"Edward, love," she said, as he approached near the window, "do you think Millicent Ray will come?"

"Yes, surely; why not?"

"But she's late."

"You said two o'clock, darling; it is not one yet."

"And when she does come, will she do what I want, Edward?"

"Of course, how can she help doing what you want, or any one else? you know you've only to ask and have."

"Of you, my Edward, I know; but if all the world were like you, I should be so spoilt that there would

be no bearing me. Hark! there's the gate-bell, —Millicent Ray, I dare say."

It was Millicent; and she was shown at once into the presence of Mrs. Ponsonby.

The sweet smile and pleasant good morning which saluted her won Millicent's heart at once.

"I must apologise for sending for you, Millicent," Mrs. Ponsonby continued, "but I am not equal to the least exertion, and seldom get beyond the garden."

"Pray do not mention that, ma'am. I am very pleased to come to you, and always shall be whenever you require me."

"Thank you very much. I will not detain you longer than I can help, but come at once to the point. Now, my husband and myself are anxious to do the best we can for the flock he has so recently had committed to his care; he is able to work amongst them actively, but I am unhappily unable to do anything but think of them and make schemes for their benefit which others must carry out. Yet He who has afflicted me with such delicate health has given me, as He does to all His creatures, compensation for the trial. I have money at my command, and wish to spend it in the most efficient way for the good of our poor. I find there is a school for girls and boys, with an excellent master; but I am anxious to establish a kind of Training School for the bigger girls; and it was on

that subject I wanted to see you, for the late Vicar's wife, Mrs. Thornby, recommended me to come to you in any little parochial difficulty, for you had been her right hand."

"Mrs. Thornby is very kind, ma'am, I'm sure to say so; I shall be most happy to make myself useful to you in any way that I can."

Another sweet smile, which went straight to Millicent's warm heart, and then Mrs. Ponsonby continued, "Well, then, can you first of all tell me of any room I can hire for a commencement, and any person who would be mistress?"

"With regard to the room, ma'am, I fancy there is a cottage with one large old-fashioned kitchen to it that would do, but I do not know that they would let it without the whole house."

"That I should not mind: I would take all the house. Would it do for a residence for the mistress?"

"Very nicely, I should think, ma'am. There is a pretty little parlour, and two,—indeed I think three bed-rooms."

"That settles the house then. Now about a mistress. Can you recommend or name any one to me whom you think would do?"

"No; I really do not feel that I can honestly recommend any one in this village, at least any one who could undertake it."

"I had thought of some one," said Mrs. Ponsonby, looking up archly at Millicent,—“some one whom I think would do capitally, who could teach what I want taught,—useful knowledge, to render them good wives and mothers. But will she undertake it? I mean Millicent Ray.”

“O Mrs. Ponsonby, I really don't know what to say!”

“I do not want you to decide at once; I am sure that would be impossible; it requires thinking of: but if you will kindly think it over, and, as quickly as you can, let me know your decision, I shall be very much obliged. My proposal is to give 40*l.* a-year and the house to the mistress; it is for you to consider if this suits you, and I will then give you the rest of my plan for the conduct of the school.”

There was a strange expression that flitted for a moment over Millicent's face; it would have been difficult to say whether it was an expression of joy or sadness; perhaps it would have been better explained by the word *perplexity*. She paused before she answered, and then said in a low voice,—

“Permit me to think over your proposal for a day or two; and do not think me ungrateful or not sensible of the great compliment you pay me if I refuse; will you?” she asked, with earnest simplicity.

“I will not, indeed; I will only ask you to en-

deavour to find me some one to supply your place; and now I will not detain you longer."

"Thank you, ma'am; I will call again to-morrow or next day, if convenient to you."

"Any time: I am unfortunately always at home. Good morning, Millicent;" and she placed her delicate white hand in Millicent's hard, brown one, which she shook kindly, and Millicent took her leave.

"Edward, dearest, I am charmed with her!" said Mrs. Ponsonby, when her husband entered the room; "she is the very person for what I want; so well-mannered and gentle, with such a nice, sensible, good face!"

"That's well, darling! and is it settled?"

"Oh, no, I could not expect that; she has to consult her father and mother, and some one else, I suspect, by what Mrs. Thornby told me. There is some mystery about an attachment she has had for years, poor thing!"

"Ha! ha! Edith! now you must be happy! a pathetic love-story is the very thing for you."

"Now don't laugh, you naughty boy, because it is really true; Mrs. Thornby told me so. She has been attached to some man for five years, and no one seems to know why they don't get married."

"I suppose because he can't afford to keep her. What is he?"

"I don't know. Oh, yes, by the bye, Mrs-

Thornby said he was a carpenter, worked for some one in Alringford. I shall try and find out about it."

"And marry them, if you can, eh, love?" said her husband, smiling.

"Yes, certainly; I have such good experience of matrimonial happiness, that I am anxious, like a good Christian, to make my fellow-creatures as happy as I am myself."

"After that I can say nothing more but offer to help you down to luncheon, which is quite ready."

Edith took her husband's proffered arm, and went down to luncheon, her thoughts divided between her school and the quickest method of uniting Millicent Ray to Philip Hartley.

Millicent walked away with a quick, active step, calling as she passed to inquire after Mrs. Ward's baby, whom she found much quieted by the medicine.

"Did you give her the milk and water?"

"No, I didn't, for she didn't seem to want it. Very like the physic gripes her, for she ain't half so craving as she most times is. She seemed quite satisfied with what I gave her this morning."

"The medicine is the cause, no doubt; but not because it gripes her, but because it has done her good. That craving hunger you describe was caused by acidity, which this medicine corrects. Whenever you find her hunting as if for food very soon after



feeding, before she can possibly be hungry, give her a tea-spoonful of that medicine, and she will probably go off in a sweet sleep; but pray give up feeding her with solid food, or you will very likely bring on some complaint which may kill her."

"Well, it never killed Sally, there, and she was just such another as this one, never satisfied, and we used to give her anything as we'd got ourselves."

"She was a stronger child possibly, and could stand it," answered Millicent; "but, depend on it, Mrs. Ward, that, as a rule, we cannot do better in the bringing up of children than follow Nature."

"Ah, maybe! Is that medicine very dear? for I should be glad if I could anyways afford it to have some."

"No, not very; but you shall have as much as I hope baby will want; and should you need more, I can give it you, for Mrs. Thornby, our late Vicar's wife, gave me a large bottle-full when she went away, for till then I always went to her for it. Her nurse recommended it, and gave the receipt, and I have never found it fail when I have given it."

"I think you seem quite a doctor," said Mrs. Ward, smiling.

"Well, only in very simple cases. I have always dearly loved children, and noticed them a great deal, and tried to understand their little ailments, and what

would cure them. I am persuaded that a child never cries for nothing, and I consider it the duty of the mother to find out the cause. Though I've heard many a mother say it did the child good to cry, I never could agree to that."

"Well, I don't know," answered Mrs. Ward, "but what you do see the healthiest children oftentimes cry the most."

"Yes, because they have more strength and energy to express their discomfort. A sickly child is generally very patient; and as it does not cry, no notice is taken that it ails anything, and so, too often, it slips through one's fingers before one knows it is ill; but you may depend on it that there is always a reason for a child crying when it does cry. However, if I begin to talk about babies, I shall stop here all day. I must run away; so good-bye, Mrs. Ward."

"Good-bye, I'm very much obliged to you for looking in."

"You're quite welcome; send for me if ever I can be of use to you."

Millicent soon reached home, where the old folks were anxiously expecting her. They had dined without her, as she asked them, for she knew she should be late home; but they had kept some warm for her, and whilst she ate it she told them what her butter

and eggs had fetched at market, and then of her interview with Mrs. Ponsonby.

"Well, what do you think of doing, my dear?" asked her mother.

"I cannot make my mind up, mother, at all yet. I must give up the cow, and the chickens and pig, if I do, certainly, for I shall not have time for them."

"No, my dear; but then see how much more you will get by it."

"But what's to become of you and father? If you went with me, there's a bed-room, certainly, but no sitting-room."

"Oh, we should manage somehow."

"I could make the third bed-room into a sitting-room, certainly," continued Millicent, "for that matter; but what I should like would be if you could stay on here, if some one could be found to take care of you and the farming-stock," she said, laughing; "then we should get on bravely, and soon be quite rich."

"Well, my dear, you had better ask Philip what he thinks when he comes to-night; he knows how to settle everything. Ah! if you two would only make a match of it."

"Hush! hush, mother, that's a forbidden subject, you know," said Millicent.

And there was a long pause, broken at last by Millicent saying,

"Don't, please, mother, if he comes to-night, mention the school to him. I should like 'to sleep upon it' before I say anything to any one about it."

"Very well, my dear, I only hope you'll try and not consider us; we've been tie enough to you, and we'd best go into 'the House' at once than prevent you doing a good thing for yourself."

"That's another forbidden subject, mother," said Millicent, cheerfully, as she rose to clear away the dinner things. "I hope I've learnt too well what honouring my father and mother means to let you go on the parish while God gives me health and strength to keep you out. So now we will not say any more about this new scheme until to-morrow. —Oh, here comes Mary Aldham! You know she was 'asked' last Sunday, mother; don't you?"

"Yes, my dear, I heard father say so when he came home from church."

"Come in, Mary," said Millicent, opening the cottage door, as a very pretty, bright-looking girl approached it.

"Well, Millicent, how do you do?" she said; "I did not much expect to find you."

"Why, am I out so often?"

"Well, pretty much, I think. How d'ye do, Mrs. Ray?"

"How d'ye do, my dear? Sit you down, won't you?"

"Thank you, I don't know as I can stop long, but I thought I'd just run up and have a talk to Millicent. Anne's at work at Mrs. Prettyman's."

"Then you're all alone," said Millicent.

"Yes, she was there yesterday, too. Have you been to market to-day?"

"Yes."

"I just met Mrs. Hardy coming back; I can't think how ever any one buys her butter—it is such stuff. We had half a pound of her the other day, and it's all streaky and rank and all sorts. Very different from yours, Millicent."

"She salts it after it comes to butter, instead of salting her cream," answered Millicent, "maybe that is the reason—many persons think so—and she does not beat the buttermilk out, nor is she half particular enough with her churn. I told her so the other day, but she says I'm too fussy by half."

"Well, if I keep a cow, I shall come to you to teach me, Millicent. Would you advise me to have a cow when I'm married? because Robert says he has saved enough to buy one if I can manage it, and that we may run it on the Common if we live in the village."

"I should advise you to do something to help.

I think it is the wife's duty to do something to assist her husband; and it is better, of course, that that something should be a home occupation, for a wife, and perhaps a mother, Mary," continued Millicent, smiling, "should never be far from home. Needle-work, or clear-starching, or poultry, or a cow, or something of that kind managed by the wife, brings in a nice little sum at the end of the week."

"Yes; that's what I've thought of. Robert earns fourteen shillings a-week, and if I could earn four or five, it would be a capital help for all manner of little things; but there I don't know what I could do, for Anne has always done everything for both of us. I never was handy at anything but reading, and writing, and spelling,—those I've always beat poor Anne at; but as to housekeeping I really haven't a notion of it. I don't know how I shall get on."

"Why, as you have the advantage of being able to read, you must get books and try to find out from them how to get on; there are such nice cheap ones to be bought now—cookery-books and all kinds—and if you really give your mind to it, and want to learn, you'll soon get on. I think, Mary, there are two golden rules for a wife to keep her husband in good humour:—Give him a good dinner and a clean hearth. There's a woman in this village whose husband earns quite thirty shillings a-week, and yet the

house always looks dirty and desolate, and she told me herself they seldom tasted meat."

. "She's got a large family, I suppose?"

"Well, there is a good number of them, certainly; but the quantity of bread, butter, and tea and sugar they have, cost them as much as meat would, because it does not go so far. Something that smells savoury when a man comes home from work, must surely be better and more comfortable than tea and bread and butter. Soups, I always think, are so nice, and so cheap too. A few penn'orth of bones and some vegetables make a capital soup—with rice in it or oatmeal, a famous dinner. Then potatoes and onion cut in slices, with a little pepper and salt, put in a pie-dish and covered with a crust made with dripping, is also very nice. One good joint of meat would make dinners for all the week well managed."

"Oh! yes, I know *you* could make it do, Millicent, so could Anne; but I'm not like either of you; but I shall try, you may depend on it, and I daresay you'll both come and help me with advice; won't you?"

"I will certainly, Mary, when I can, and I'm sure I shall be very happy to write you out receipts, if you haven't a cookery-book, for lots of cheap dinners."

"Thank you, Millicent, you're always good-natured to everybody. I never can think how you find time

to be so useful to so many people, and yet keep your own home so nice."

"Management, my dear,—management," said Mrs. Ray, who had been quite amused with the conversation of the little bride elect. "You've no idea how much may be done with that and early rising; our Millicent never was a lie-a-bed, and she's never idle, every hour of the day she's got employment for."

"I ought to show Mary what I call my odd-moment work, oughtn't I, mother?" said Millicent, laughing.

"Ah! do, my dear, I'll get it; I'm sure it's a lesson to any young woman of what can be done by industry;" and the old woman drew from an oaken chest that stood in one corner of the room a patchwork quilt beautifully put together.

"That is pretty," said Mary; "do you mean to say that you've done that at odd-and-ends times only?"

"Yes; I always take three or four of the diamonds in my pocket wherever I go, so that if I'm kept waiting I can do a little bit; of course I've been a very long time at it, because I make a rule never to do it unless I really have at the moment nothing else to do, but I shall, if I live to get it finished, some day be very proud of it."

"Well, it is a thing to be proud of too, but I must



run home really. I'm trying to make myself a gown, but I don't know what it will be like, for I'm a wretched hand at it. Poor mother never would have us taught to work at school; she said she sent us there for book-learning, we could work at home: but that was a great mistake; I'm often enough sorry for it now."

"Yes, Mary; you may depend sewing is more useful to poor women than too much reading and writing," said old Mrs. Ray; "the schools want to learn you to be good wives and mothers; that was such a one as our Millicent went to,—and wouldn't she make a wife?"

"Dear mother, now don't you begin praising me or you'll make me blush and keep Mary too late."

"Well, I think it would take a long time to say all the good we could of you; and after that I'll go," said Mary; "so good bye."

"Good bye, Mary; I shall come up and see you two or three times before you are married."

"Yes, do. Good-bye;" and Mary Aldham started off running at a quick pace, for she thought she had somewhat overstayed her time talking to Millicent. Yet she never regretted, or considered it time wasted, half-an-hour spent with Millicent, for she always found she had learnt something; and now her little head was full of plans for the comfort of her husband's

home; and she hoped with an earnest hope that Millicent and her sister's good advice would not be thrown away upon her, but that she should be a good and useful wife to the man to whom she had given her young warm heart.

When Millicent came down the next morning she had a very beaming face, as though happy dreams or thoughts were in her mind; and as she was seated at breakfast she gave utterance to the schemes that were busy in her brain.

"Father and mother, I think if you agree to my plan, I have hit on something which will enable me to accept the school without unsettling you a bit. You know you were saying the other day how you wished you could help poor uncle with his large family,—get some of the girls a place or something; well I've been thinking if you have Susan here to look after you and father and mind the animals, she would be out of poor uncle's cupboard, and be learning to be handy. We could manage to get the cow milked for a trifle till she could learn, and the dairy-work you could show her. Mother, what do you think?"

"Well I don't know as it wouldn't answer very well," said Mrs. Ray.

"What do you say, father?"

"Why, that it be like most of thy thoughts, a very good 'un!"

"Thank you, father! then we've nothing to do but write to uncle and ask him to let Susan come," said Millicent, joyfully. "As soon as he consents I will run up to Mrs. Ponsonby and tell her I'll undertake the school; I feel sure I can manage it; it's the very thing I should like!"

"Then you'd best write to-day to uncle."

"Oh! yes, mother, I will. I really think you'll be very comfortable with Susan, because I shall be close by to come and see after you."

"Yes, my dear; we shall do very well, I've no doubt;" but a slight sigh accompanied the words, for the poor old mother could not help thinking that the sunshine of her home would be gone, when she could not daily gaze on the face of the child who had been her comfort and support so long.

As soon as Millicent had milked her cow, fed her chickens and the pig, and strained and set her milk, she started off to Mrs. Ward's to see after the baby. On her road a woman met her running very hurriedly.

"What's the matter, Mrs. Coleman?" asked Millicent.

"Why, Patty Pearson's bad again; her lungs has rose, and I'm going up to Mr. Prettyman's to ask for some shot."

Millicent stared in astonishment, for, conversant

as she was with most ordinary complaints and their remedies, this novel one completely puzzled her.

"I do not think I rightly understand you," she said.

"Well, I can't stop to tell you, for she's terrible bad!" and away she ran again, leaving Millicent wondering what could be the matter with Patty Pearson.

"I'm close by their cottage when I'm at Mrs. Ward's; I'll go and see what it is," she thought; "and prevent, if I can, their giving her such an extraordinary remedy;" and, hurrying on, she soon arrived at the Pearsons' cottage, which was only a stone's throw from Mrs. Ward's. The door was open, so she stepped in.

"Can I be of any use, Mrs. Pearson? I hear Patty isn't well."

"No, she ain't at all well; Mrs. Coleman says it's her lungs has rose, and she's to swallow some shot. What do you think?"

"I cannot imagine that such a remedy would do any one any good; and I never heard of such a complaint."

"Will you just step up and see her?"

"Yes, I will, I may be able to do her good;" and Millicent followed Mrs. Pearson upstairs to the room above, where she found a young girl seated on the

edge of the bed, leaning her head against the bed-post, looking very flushed in the face, and holding one hand up to her throat.

"What's the matter, Patty?" said Millicent gently.

The girl looked up at her, and suddenly burst into a violent fit of weeping.

"Lor bless the girl!" said her mother; "what's the matter now?"

"I know all about it; I thought how it was," said Millicent. "Let us lay her down on the bed, and in a few moments she will be much better; but get her things quite loose; that's it. Now, Patty, don't give way, there's a good girl; you can stop in a minute, making that noise, and you *must*!" she said very decidedly.

"Oh, dear! whatever shall we do?" whispered the mother.

"Get a little vinegar, please, she will be much better presently." And, having laid her on the bed and loosened her things, Millicent placed a handkerchief dipped in vinegar and water over her forehead, and with a strong, firm pressure held her hand on her chest; in a few moments the sobs grew less violent, some quiet tears flowed softly and freely, and the poor girl raised a look of gratitude at the kind face bending over her.

"Thank you, Millicent; I am better now."

"To be sure you are; but don't talk now; you must be very still, and I will sit beside you till you feel quite well again."

"Here's Mrs. Coleman," said the mother, "shall we give her the shot?"

"Oh, dear! no; I will go down to her, shall I? I do not think she ought to come up here."

"Yes, please, Millicent; and just you say she ain't to have it; will you?"

"I'll see if I can make her understand it is useless."

"Oh, you're here, are you?" said the woman, as soon as Millicent appeared. "I've got the shot. I have run so!"

"That was very kind of you, but she is better now; and really I think the remedy a very strange one."

"Well, it's a very good thing, I can tell you; but there's no call to take them. I've fetched them, and there they are. Next time she's ill they'd better send for you, and not fetch me away in the middle of a wash!" and, waiting to hear no apology or explanation, she flew out of the cottage, banging the door after her.

"She's rather angry, Millicent, ain't she?" asked Mrs. Pearson, when Millicent returned.

"Well, yes, rather; she'll forget it to-morrow, she's only hasty. You're much better now, ain't you, Patty?"

"Yes, thank you."

"What do you think it is ails her, Millicent? she was just like this a day or two ago."

"Hysterics, the complaint is called; it causes a sensation in the throat like a lump, which, I suppose, made poor Mrs. Coleman talk of 'lungs rising.'"

"Oh, I've often heard talk of 'sterics, but don't know as I ever saw anybody in them before. She seemed so ill that I asked Mrs. Coleman to step in; and when Patty said how she felt, she said directly it was her lungs a-rising, and that she'd be choked if she did not have the shot; she quite frightened me."

"Well, you need not be frightened any more, for you see the crying relieved the sensation directly,—did not it, Patty? You must try not to give way to it, that's all; go out in the air when you feel it coming; and I would advise you to get about a penn'orth of camphor, and put it in a quart bottle, filled up with water; you'll find a wineglass-full of that stop it probably when it is coming on."

"Well, that's a very easy thing; we'll do that, thank you, Millicent; every one says that you're such a famous doctor."

"At the school I was at we learnt doctoring, you

know," answered Millicent laughing. "That is to say, all common complaints, with their causes, were explained to us, and the common remedies for them; and how to make simple things,—ointments, and such like,—you'd be amused to see a shelf I have at home, with a whole row of pots full of one sort of ointment and another."

"Well, it's a very good thing for yourself and your neighbours too, I'm sure."

"It comes useful sometimes, certainly; but I must go now. You'll get the camphor, won't you, else I shan't think you believe in my doctoring?"

"That we will! Good-bye!"

Millicent went next to Mrs. Ward's; the baby was getting on much better, but the house was dirty, and the children cross, and nothing could look more comfortless than it all did.

Millicent, after talking to Mrs. Ward for a short time, suggested the children going to school.

"I should like for 'em to go well enough, but I haven't anything decent for them to go in, and I should be troubled to spare the money every week."

"It's only a penny each child."

"No, but that mounts up when there's two or three to go; but there, I would manage to scrape it together for a month or two, if I could send 'em decent,—they ain't fit to go outside the door."



"If I can help you make anything for them, I should be very happy, Mrs. Ward; I'm very fond of making children's clothes."

"Oh, thank you! I'm a very poor hand at making things myself, but I shouldn't like to trouble you: however, we shall see, when my husband gets his wages, if I can squeeze out a little to clothe the two biggest."

"Well, remember, if I can help you in any way, I'm ready;" and so saying Millicent took her leave.

When she reached home she had the dinner to get, and afterwards to clear it away; wash up, clean the hearth, and put the kettle on for tea,—laying the fire first, ready to be set light to, to boil the water when it was wanted, for in the warm weather she always let the fire out after cooking her dinner, to save the coal; but laid it again, that it might not take many minutes to have a fire if needed. And Millicent knew well how to lay a fire, too,—she was always careful to rake every atom of dust out of the grate first, leaving only a few large cinders at the bottom, on these she placed some dry paper or some shavings, a bundle of which Philip often brought her on purpose; then some sticks across and across, and on the top of them a few live coals, and some of the larger cinders. All the small ashes and dust she carefully saved, and carried out to her chickens, for she knew there was

nothing they liked better than an ash-heap to scratch about in. These various employments occupied her till three or four o'clock, then she dressed herself, and sat down to needlework till milking-time.

And the shades of evening again began to close over the village, the glare of the day to fade away, and a feeling of repose and stillness to creep pleasantly over the senses. Millicent had put away her needlework and written the letter to her uncle; and that finished, she stood out in the porch looking up the street, positively for the moment doing nothing but smiling a bright radiant smile,—the last rays of the setting sun were scarcely less bright, that were turning her hair to gold, as she stood there in the porch;—and gradually the sun goes down and the light fades more quickly, and the brightest of little stars starts forth and trembles like a gem in the clear atmosphere, and still Millicent stands in the porch; and the labouring men pass with a pleasant “good evening,” and little children, their pinafores laden with corn they have been gleaning, drag home behind their mothers, carrying, some even a sack full of the golden grain; and soon the passers-by cease altogether, and lights begin to gleam in the cottage-windows, and then, and not till then, Millicent leaves the porch, and steps out to the garden-gate, and opening it admits Philip Hartley.

Positively, Millicent, there is a blush in your face, mantling to the very forehead like a girl of sixteen, as Philip takes in both his hands the one extended to him. She seems, too, as though she knew not what to say nor how to welcome him, save with that glad smile and bright blush; and so, seating themselves beneath the roses in the porch, they are both silent for awhile, Philip keeping tight hold though of the hand he has taken in his; at length, in a low voice, Millicent says,—

“Philip, I have something to say to you, but I really don’t exactly know how so say it, because—because you know it isn’t Leap-year.”

He started, and then said hurriedly,—

“Millicent, don’t trifle with me, I can’t bear it; it’s been too long for that; I’ve tried to bear it patiently.”

“You have, you have, my good Philip; and my earnest prayer to Heaven is that I may be enabled to reward you!” Millicent had found her tongue now. “Believe me I would not trifle with you, nor wrong in thought the good, true heart that has trusted me so long,—since that day that you told me you loved me—years ago now, Philip!—why we were quite young things then!” She tried to speak lightly, for she felt the strong arm and hand which held hers trembling. “Since that day I have never thought of you but as my husband,—one day to be so, really, if

you lived, and to have no other if—if you died; but I would not marry you then, Philip, warmly as you urged it, for a reason!”

“Which you have never told me, Millicent,” he said, reproachfully.

“No, dear Philip! because I knew you would never receive it as one, or allow it to be an obstacle; but this night you shall know it. My father and mother could not support themselves, and had I married you, they must have become chargeable to the parish, or a burden on you —— Stop! don’t speak yet. I have now opened for me a prospect of keeping them comfortably in this cottage where they have been so long; and yet Philip being—I ought to be too old to be bashful and silly—but you must finish the sentence.”

“My wife! is that what you were going to say?” he said, jumping up from his seat.

He just heard her low answer, and then—it was well the light had faded, and that the passers-by had ceased, and that only that gem-like star was watching them; for in the open porch he threw his arms about her and pressed her to his fast-beating heart; and then he asked her how it was that she could for such a reason have refused to marry him; that to work for her, and her parents too, would have been happi-

ness to him, and that surely she believed he would not have let the poor old folks go to the Union.

"No, Philip, I knew you wouldn't; but I knew that it was too heavy a charge on any young couple; we should have got behind-hand in the first year, and been a long, long time, if ever, before we got straight with the world; but I haven't yet told you what the plan is. Mrs. Ponsonby is going to open a kind of training-school for servants, and has offered me to be mistress. Forty pounds a-year and a house, Philip; only think of that! I have settled, therefore, that Susan Ray, my cousin, shall come and live here with the old people, and look after the animals, which, with father and mother's teaching, she can do;—and for *you* and me to live at *my* house! how grand that sounds, doesn't it?"

"It does, indeed; and with what I earn, really, Millicent, we shall be quite rich!"

"Rich in content and happiness, I hope, dear Philip; and I shall be quite happy about the dear old people; they will go on undisturbed in their old way, not feeling themselves a burden to us, and not degraded into paupers; so if uncle only consents to let Susan come it's all settled. I was half afraid you would not have me after waiting so long," she said, laughing merrily.

"You never thought any such thing, you saucy puss; you know that——"

"Art going to get us any supper to-night, lass?"

Whatever Philip was about to say was thus interrupted by the old man; but as it was doubtless much such a speech as Methuselah made to his wife, and has been repeated by all lovers ever since, it is of little consequence. Millicent could imagine it, and I dare say we can; for, perhaps, there have been moments in all our lives when some such sweet words have made our hearts beat faster, and we have thought there was no music like the voice that uttered them, nor any sameness in the repetition. And so they went in to supper, and after supper Philip told the old folks of what he and Millicent had settled in the porch, which caused a great deal of shaking of hands and kind speeches one to another, and then Philip stayed while the old man read prayers, feeling so happy, kneeling by her whom he hoped now soon to call his wife, offering his prayers with greater fervency than perhaps he had ever done, for his heart was full of gratitude to the Almighty Disposer of events, whom he felt had blessed him thus largely; and who can say it is not a blessing the possession of a good woman's pure and undivided heart; it is a shield in the moment of temptation, a support in the hour of adversity, an encouragement in the battle of

life, a softening influence to smooth the rugged edges which contact with the hard world makes in most men's natures. Philip felt all this,—the recollection of his early home, of the good mother who had taught him all of good he knew, who had made his childhood's home full of pleasant memories to him, had taught him fully to believe in the matchless treasure of a woman's love: he remembered her gentle ministry at his father's dying bed, her patience with all the wearying anxieties of that sad time; and he fully believed that no home could be complete or happy without the ruling, gentle spirit of woman to soften all harshnesses, and be a comfort in all sorrows. This was his meditation as he went home that night full of bright anticipations of the future home which awaited him.

## CHAPTER III.

**"Hear instruction, be wise, and refuse it not."—Proverbs.**

**EARLY** the next morning Susan Ray made her appearance; she had walked over from the village where they lived, some seven or eight miles off, delighted at the thought of the new life offered to her, and most anxious to tell her aunt and uncle she could come. So, with her heart full of hope and happiness, Millicent after dinner started for the Vicarage. She found Mrs. Ponsonby out in the garden, for it was a lovely day, and her couch had been carried out beneath the trees; she was looking brighter and better, and, in answer to Millicent's inquiry after her health, she said,—

"Well, I really am better, thank you, Millicent, catching some of my husband's hopefulness, for I don't know when I have felt so well. And you, too, look bright—very bright—are you come with good news for me?"



"I hope you will think so, ma'am," answered Millicent, smiling. "I am come to say that I shall be very happy to undertake the school."

"Oh, that is capital!" said Mrs. Ponsonby, clapping her hands like a child with glee; "I have got the house—the very one you named, I fancy—at the corner of the Common, opposite the mill!"

"Yes, that is the one I named, ma'am. You find it suitable?"

"Yes; my husband seems to think it just the thing for a temporary school. And as I am now so much better, I shall go and see it myself: it is quite an amusing excitement to me; and now that I have a mistress, I shall be still more delighted. What about furniture? have you any?"

"I have not myself any; but," said Millicent, smiling and blushing, "I shall be able to get some now I dare say, because ——"

"You are going to be married?" hastily interrupted Mrs. Ponsonby.

"Yes, ma'am."

"I am very glad of that; I heard a little about it from Mrs. Thornby. I think you will be very comfortable in the house, by what my husband tells me, the rooms seem quite a nice size, and there is a piece of garden ground which will be pleasant to work in in the summer evenings."

"Thank you, it will indeed. I only hope I shall give you satisfaction; I know I shall take great interest in the school."

"That is a great point. I am sure if you feel its importance as I do, you will work with heart and soul in it. Can you stay now to hear my ideas on it, or will you come again?"

"I can stay now, ma'am, if you wish."

"It will not detain you very long; but I have just written down here my notion of the plan and rules;" and she took from a little work-table beside her a paper, from which she read the following:—

"Girls who can read and write, only to be admitted, and none under twelve years of age. The school to open at half-past eight, with prayers; the head girl to read the First Lesson for the day, the next girl the Second Lesson. The instruction to be carried on is keeping accounts, book-keeping, washing, cooking, making and cutting out clothes, and bread-making, butter-making, and household work. Until the proper school-house, with appropriate offices, is built, this instruction must be given more from books, but the work, which I consider very important, can be begun at once. One day in each week the girls are to bring work from home; and I wish them encouraged to bring old clothes to mend and turn, and stockings to darn. Every afternoon to be devoted to needle-work,

the morning to instructions in the subjects named above. The school to close at twelve in the morning, with a grace, sung or chanted ; to re-open at two o'clock in the afternoon, and close at a quarter past four in the summer, four in the winter, with prayers, and the Evening Lessons read by two girls as in the morning.'

"Now this sort of prospectus I am going to have printed and distributed in the village, and I should like to know from you what day you think you could commence."

"Yes, ma'am ; I will let you know as soon as I can."

"I shall provide a school work-box, in which there will be every requisite, and Bibles and other useful books ; but whatever you find necessary, you must let me know. Saturday, of course, is a holiday, and that would be a good day for you to see me and report, and let me know all your requirements. When the school-house is built and the offices, I shall like the instruction to be practical ; that is, for the girls really to cook and wash, &c., but I do not think there is sufficient accommodation in the present building. I shall only require the girls to take turns to clean the school-room."

"That had better be mentioned in the prospectus then, I think, ma'am ; or objections might be raised.

I have heard that there is generally a difficulty in getting that done in all schools."

"Is there, really? Then I will be sure to mention it."

"And about payment, too?"

"Oh, yes! I had forgotten that. I think threepence a-week each girl will do very well. When we are able to give them places for cooking, washing, &c., I shall offer to take washing at the school from such persons as are willing to subscribe a certain sum a month towards the maintenance of the school. Work, too, can also be sent and done for a scale of prices which I must trouble you to make out, as you know so much better than I do what is the value of the work. Every now and then I shall have a lecture delivered on such subjects as are of importance to them in their walk of life; and I do hope that we shall turn out girls who will be a credit to us, and useful members of society."

"I earnestly hope so, too. I am sure I can never be sufficiently thankful that I went to a school where such instruction was given, for it has been of the greatest service to me."

"And to your neighbours, Millicent. My husband tells me he hears you quoted everywhere. Now, if you can only manage to teach the girls what you

know yourself, and also to apply it as you do, you will quite answer my expectations."

"Edith! Edith! that is quite enough! What a flushed, excited face! Millicent, I must send you away, I fear," said Mr. Ponsonby, advancing to where they sat, and raising his hat to Millicent as he addressed her.

"I thought, sir, I was tiring Mrs. Ponsonby, but I scarcely liked to interrupt her in a subject in which she seemed so interested."

"Too interested for her health's sake, I fear. You are so much better, darling," he said, tenderly turning to her, "that you must not throw yourself back again with over-work in this new project."

"No, I don't wish to do that, dear Edward, but I am so delighted because I have got a mistress without any further trouble. Millicent is going to undertake it."

"I am very glad to hear it. Then we must settle what day to begin; and I will go round and see what the parents think of it, and how many girls we can muster."

"I hope they will take to it, for I am sure instruction in such matters is greatly needed in this village; do you not think so, Millicent?"

"I do, indeed, ma'am; and I trust I shall carry out your views to your satisfaction."

"I have no doubt of that," replied Mrs. Ponsonby.

"If you do not require me any longer, I will go now," said Millicent.

"No; I shall only be glad to hear, as soon as possible, what day we may fix for opening the school."

"I will be sure to let you know as soon as I can. Good morning, ma'am; good morning, sir;" and, with her thoughts full of the new life opening before her, Millicent walked home.

Susan had waited for her return, and a very happy party sat down to tea. Though sorry to lose her, the old people, loving her as they did, could not but be glad that she was going to be so happy; that a life of constant usefulness, for which she was so well adapted, was opening for her. And Susan—poor little Susan!—felt her fortune was made, and she had nothing left to wish for; and all tea-time she chattered on of what she should do.

"I shall be very awkward at first, Millicent, I know; but after a bit I hope I shall be as clever as you. I shall try and remember all you teach me. I think I should like cooking. I've often thought how I should like to make all them nice things in poor mother's old cookery book."

"Ah! Susan, we can't afford to have many of such dishes; but homely pies and puddings you can

easy learn to make; indeed, I suppose you're the cook at home, and so know how to make such things," said Mrs. Ray.

"No, aunt, I don't; we never have anything cooked at home, except, perhaps, a few potatoes. We never have meat; only bread and butter and Dutch cheese, with now and then potatoes and turnips. Father says he can't afford meat."

"We shall make you so clever," said Millicent, smiling, "that you will be able to teach them at home how to live better on less money, and show them how they can have many a meat-dinner."

"I should like if I could, for the poor little ones often wish they could have some meat; but I think I must go now, or I shan't get home before dark,—it's a good step, and the days begin to shorten."

"Well, wait till after I've milked and set my pan, and then I'll walk part of the way with you."

"I can't milk, you know, Millicent."

"No, I know you can't, but you'll soon learn, and Red Rose is the gentlest creature in the world. Come out and see her. I only rattle the pail, and she comes running to me."

Susan went out with her cousin and saw her milk, and then take in the pail and strain and set the milk, and scald her pail, and rinse it with cold water and put it out in the air, and then take some corn to her

chickens, and some skim milk to the pigs, and thought how amusing such duties would be.

"Ain't scraps good for chickens, Millicent, to make them lay?"

"Yes, very: I always give them one meal a-day of bits of fat and vegetables, and any scrapings from the plates; but in the middle of the day, because if they don't pick it all up at the time they won't afterwards, and then if it stays all night it makes the place smell. Poor father built up this chicken-house before he had his paralytic stroke; he used to do so many handy jobs when he was able."

"The brown hen doesn't look very well, Millicent."

"No, she is not; but she is better than she was. I gave her a pill yesterday—some rue, and butter, and soot, rolled up in a pill, and she eats much better to-day. But I must get ready now and start you on your way."

It was almost dark before Millicent got back into the village; but Philip came to meet her, and they walked home together, talking happily of their future plans, and agreed that they should be quite ready to open school in a month from that time; for they would be "asked" the very next Sunday—it only wanted three days to that Sunday:—but how many things may happen in three days?



Mrs. Ponsonby, delighted at the progress she had made towards starting her school, could think of little else; and her husband, pleased to see the pallor and languor of face and form giving way to a rosy hue on each cheek, and a brightness of voice as new as it was delightful, helped her most willingly: for as the chief seat of her complaint was on her nerves, an amusement which stopped short of fatigue was the very thing for her, and that, at the same time, it would be benefiting his parish, added another powerful interest to the scheme. They had together arranged the prospectus, and sent it to the printer; and Mr. Ponsonby had been to several cottages endeavouring to explain the use of the school, and to induce the mothers to send their elder girls.

“You take them,” he said, “from school at an age when they are most open to evil influences. It has been proved that the time of life at which most crime is perpetrated is between fifteen and twenty years of age. You take them home to drag about a child too heavy for them; the fatigue of which irritates their tempers, until they slap the poor little unoffending creature, and so make that fretful and ill-tempered too; or you allow them to take places in farm-houses, or with petty tradespeople, where they learn nothing but to dress themselves in imitation of their betters, with the trifling sum they earn. They go as helps in

these places, doing a little of everything and nothing well; and as soon as they can leave it, offer themselves as servants in gentlemen's families, knowing nothing whatever of the duties they undertake. Now, in this school, we purpose to teach them every branch of household work, so as to make them good servants and capable of being good wives and mothers. We will take them from twelve to any age you like to send them; and I feel persuaded if you will only persevere in sending them, you will be truly grateful that such a school has been started in your village."

Thus, from cottage to cottage did he go, and after much trouble secured the promise of six girls; but it was a beginning, and that was everything.

Millicent came and told them that she thought on the 1st October she could begin, and all appeared progressing satisfactorily.

## CHAPTER IV.

"But now God hath thus ordered it, that we learn to bear one another's burdens, for no man is without faults: no man but hath his burden, no man is sufficient of himself, no man wise enough of himself; but we ought to bear with one another, comfort one another, help, instruct, and admonish one another."—THOMAS A KEMPIS.

ON Saturday morning Millicent was downstairs very early, for it was cleaning day, and she liked to have the discomfort of the cleansing performance out of the way before the old people came down to breakfast. She opened the shutters and the house-door at once, and went out in the garden to see if any of her neighbours were up, for she had seen from her bedroom window the night before what appeared to be like a large fire at some distance off, and she was anxious to know if it was so. She could not see any one about, but, waiting for a second at the gate, she saw some little way up the street a child running quickly, whom she recognised as a neighbour of the Aldhams. She was about to beckon to her when she perceived

the child was making signs to her, and when she approached near enough to be heard she said,—

“I’m come for you, Millicent, please; Anne Aldham wants you directly.”

“Why? is anything the matter?”

“Yes; Robert Mason was killed at the fire last night!”

“What do you mean, child? what do you say? What fire?” said Millicent, almost stunned by the sudden and awful news.

“Don’t you know his master’s farm took fire, where he works, and he and a good many men went to help, but a rafter fell on him and killed him? Mary is just bad.”

“Poor Mary! poor dear girl! go back directly, Jane, and say I will be with them in a few moments. I must light the fire, and get father and mother’s breakfast, and then come directly.—The cleaning must go to-day,” she said to herself; and entering the cottage she threw herself into a chair, and large heavy drops falling on her clasped hands showed how deep was her sympathy with the poor bereaved girl. Then, summoning all her courage to her aid, she hurriedly put the things in order for her parents, and telling them the sad news, and asking them to get on without her, she started on her errand of

mercy, to carry consolation and sympathy to the afflicted. Anne met her at the door.

"Come in, Millicent dear," she said softly; "here's trouble come upon us."

Millicent only answered by an earnest pressure of the hand, her heart was too full to speak.

"Where is she?" at length she asked.

"On the bed asleep now: she cried herself to sleep, like a child;" and opening the door of an inner room, Anne pointed to her sister.

She was lying on the bed, her long, glossy hair, rough and disordered now, flowing over the pillow; her eyes red and swollen with weeping, and her cheeks flushed with fever, and stained with tears; every now and then a restless movement or little sob would tell that she slept not the peaceful and refreshing sleep of the healthy and the happy, but the troubled slumber of exhaustion.

Millicent stood looking at her for a moment, and then closing the door gently the two women went back to the sitting-room.

"Oh, dear Millicent, I've sent for you because I don't know what to do, nor what is to become of us. I've worked for us both ever since poor father and mother's death, till now; and just as the work was beginning to fail, my families leaving the place,

and so on, Robert asked Mary to be his wife,—he was earning fair wages, and I thought he could keep her, and I might be able to manage to keep myself,—and now he is gone, poor fellow, and what we are to do I know not: there's nothing for us, Millicent, but the workhouse!"

"Don't say so, my poor Anne, something will turn up, perhaps."

"Ah! I've always hoped that something would, Millicent, ever since we were left orphans, and alone, to struggle with the world, but there was only me to work: dear Mary never could do anything. Poor mother's almost last words were, 'Keep Mary at school, Anne;' they thought her so clever; and I worked and worked hard to keep her there, too; but, poor child, it's been but little profit to her; and I was glad,—so glad, to think, with her pretty face and innocent ways, she would be married and safe, and that I could get on somehow: go to service or anything, but it's all over now." And two large tears rolled down the plain but honest features of this good sister, who had truly, as she said, worked hard for the maintenance of the child whom her parents left to her charge.

There was ten years difference in the ages of the two; and when the father and mother both died, Anne would not leave the little Mary to go to service, but

stayed at home to work for her, and fulfil the mother's last request, to keep her at school. Anne had had very little instruction herself: she could write and read a little, but her knowledge was all of the practical kind, learnt by experience in her mother's cottage, for when she fell sick Anne had all the work to do, while Mary was at school. She was the oldest, and could not be spared, and besides was not near so clever as Mary; and so it did not matter to give her "book-learning." Many years now had she supported herself and sister by her industry; but, as she said, the families for whom she had worked so long were gone, and the fresh comers had friends of their own to employ; and she was just beginning to wonder how they should get on, when Robert Mason asked Mary to share his heart and home. This was a great comfort to Anne: she slaved early and late to get enough to buy Mary some nice clothes to be married in; and with a fresh hope made up her own mind to go to service, now that her little darling sister was safe. But it was not to be. Wisdom, unerring Wisdom, had otherwise directed it, and now she saw nothing before her but blank despair.

There seemed to pass through Millicent's mind many and varied thoughts as she paused for a moment after Anne's last speech: conflicting feelings seemed at work, as the expression of her face would have

convinced any one who had been watching her, and it would have been difficult to say, too, what they were, but sorrow was most evident; though a light in the eye seemed to say that something of joy was mingled with it. At length she spoke:—

“At moments when we most despair, Anne,” she said, taking her hand tenderly between hers, “often there comes to us some good fortune, or great and unexpected joy, which speaks to us of the love, and mercy, and wise foresight which ordained all things, even the bitter trial which seems breaking our hearts, —shows us, Anne, that though fatherless on earth we have One in heaven who never forgets His children here, or puts on them more than they can bear. Now, when things seem so bad, and you feel so hopeless, I am the bearer, I trust, of news which will give you fresh hope, and help you to bear this sorrow well.”

“What is it, Millicent?” asked Anne, wonderingly.

“Why, dear Anne, I think there is a situation, as it were, waiting for you, one which will suit you exactly, where you can have poor Mary with you, and be, I hope and trust, happy and comfortable.”

“Nonsense, Millicent dear! what do you mean?”

“Why, our Vicar’s wife is going to open a school, and has asked me to recommend a mistress, and I am



sure, Anne, it would suit you admirably; Mrs. Ponsonby offers 40*l.* a-year and a house,—such a nice one, Anne,” she continued, brightening as she spoke, “just by the mill on the Common; you say yes, and I will go as soon as I can to Mrs. Ponsonby, and tell her I have found just the person to suit her.”

“Oh! but, Millicent, shall I really suit? I’m sure I’m not clever enough,—I know nothing.”

“You know all that is needed for this, Anne; it is not to teach reading and writing and such-like, but household work. The object of the school is to teach what is useful to a servant or poor man’s wife, and I know no one better suited than you for such a task, for you do know how all such work ought to be done; so say you’ll undertake it.”

“Well, I’ll try certainly, but I can hardly believe it, Millicent; here, ten minutes ago, we seemed as though we must starve like; and now, oh, dear me, we shall be quite rich! But there, I’m quite sure I shan’t suit, for I don’t know how to teach, Millicent—indeed, I don’t.”

“Why, silly girl,” said Millicent, “if one of the children out of the village was to come here for the day, couldn’t you show her how to clean and settle the house, how to wash, and make bread, and work, and so on?”

“Oh, yes, such as that I could tell her!”

"Well, that is all that is required; if you could tell one, you could tell more than one."

A low moan in the next room interrupted them, and Anne quickly opened the door, beckoning Millicent to follow her; Mary had awoke, and was sitting up in bed working herself backwards and forwards.

"My poor Mary!" said Millicent, coming up to her and laying her hand kindly on her shoulder.

They were simple words; but there was such heartfelt sympathy in the tone that they were uttered in, that the floodgate of her tears was again unloosed and she wept unrestrainedly; and then Millicent sat down beside her and talked to her in a plain, homely way, such as she understood and felt, setting before her how good it was to suffer, how it made us feel that God had not forgotten us, that He thought us worthy of His chastening; and that when the first bitter agony had passed, how much better such sorrows made us, till the almost angry grief of the poor girl abated, and she sorrowed not as one without hope. As soon as Millicent found her calm she prepared to return home, whispering as she left the cottage,—

"Courage, Anne! you will soon be mistress of the new school."

Poor Millicent! she had only just time to get

inside her own door, before she fell forward in a dead faint!

The mother, dreadfully alarmed, called a neighbour to assist her, and between them they carried her to bed. As soon as she came to herself, she said there was nothing to be frightened at,—she should be quite well in a moment, if they would kindly get her some breakfast, it was going out without it, and being so sorry for the poor Aldhams,—so upset with the news. And so her mother was satisfied with this explanation and believed it was so.

Mr. Ponsonby was busy in his study writing that afternoon, when a low tap, the sound of which he knew well, disturbed him.

“Come in, my Edith.”

“I am sorry to disturb you, dear; but I wanted so much to come and tell you something. Only fancy, Millicent is not going to be mistress after all!”

“Indeed! why not?”

“Well, she says she would rather resign it in favour of a young woman, whom she thinks admirably fitted for it, and to whom it would be the greatest charity; and so I think it would, dear, for it is such a sad story.” And Edith proceeded to relate the story of the Aldhams to her husband.

“Millicent seems so anxious about them, and assures me that if I will kindly allow her to give the

place up to Anne, that I shall not repent it; and, of course, so long as we have an adequate person, it is of no consequence, and, as she is going to be married, perhaps it's just as well."

"But will she be married if she resigns the school? It strikes me from what I have heard that becoming mistress induced her to marry. I think there is some mystery in all this."

"Well, she certainly did seem low-spirited: I wonder what it means. I hope they have not quarrelled. I really am afraid there is something wrong."

"I should be afraid so; however, darling, it will not injure your school if Anne Aldham is a competent person for the purpose. I will go and see her and poor Mary by-and-by: it's a sad thing! Robert Mason was a good, steady young fellow."

"Do you know, dear, how the fire occurred?" asked Mrs. Ponsonby.

"A simple act of carelessness, which unhappily causes many sad results; moving a candle with a long wick to it without first snuffing it, a spark flew on to the muslin blind, which took fire directly, and the terrified servant, who had done the mischief, instead of tearing down the curtain and stamping on it, or otherwise smothering it, flew screaming downstairs, leaving the door wide open; the result was, of course, the sad fire."

"How very silly! but I know it is a common trick of servants; I am continually telling our servants of it."

"You will teach in your school, dear," he said, smiling, "that fire will not burn without air; and that, therefore, if you wish to light one, you cause as much draught as possible; but if your house or dress takes fire, you endeavour to prevent the flames spreading by excluding every atom of air."

"You must not laugh at my school, Edward!" said Edith, looking up at him, pleadingly.

"My child," he answered, fondly stroking her soft hair, as though she really was a child, "I am not likely to laugh at anything so useful; I really mean that such things are good to be taught and necessary;—but I must finish my sermon, dearest, and I will then go and see if Anne Aldham will do in Millicent's place; but I must say I have my doubts, so do not permit yourself to be too much disappointed if she does not suit!"

"But if not, what is to be done, dear?"

"It is time enough to think of that when we are sure she will not suit; but we must remember that it is a peculiar kind of person who is required for such a purpose;—all are not Millicent Rays; it would indeed be wonderful to find two in one village!"

"Yes; that is very true! but unless I employ

some one in the parish, part of my object is destroyed ; for I thought it such an excellent thing for some nice person — a house and a small certainty — and though, of course, by advertising I could obtain a proper mistress, I wish to serve some of our own parishioners. I therefore hope, if Anne Aldham will not do, that we can persuade Millicent to take it ; but I won't interrupt you any longer ; you keep eyeing your sermon-paper as though you wished me away ; so good-bye, and bring me good news about Anne. By the by," she said, returning into the room, "I am going to send some wine down to Patty Pearson, whom, Millicent tells me, requires some very much, and to beg Mrs. Ward to send her two eldest children to the National School, and I will pay for them. No objection to any of this, have you, dear ?"

"No ; but only do not do too much of that paying for the children, or you will find the parents will all be expecting it, and not send their children, in the hope that you will."

"Very well ; I'll remember. Good-bye !"

## CHAPTER V.

“ Better trust all and be deceived,  
And weep that trust and that deceiving,  
Than doubt one heart that if believed  
Had blessed one's life with true believing.”

F. KEMBLE'S *Poems*.

THE sun seemed to shine with unusual brilliancy on that Sabbath morning, on which, for the first and second times, the banns were to have been published for Mary Aldham and Robert Mason, and Millicent Ray and Philip Hartley.

But how little can we tell what a day may bring forth? The lifeless form of Robert Mason lay on a bed in his mother's cottage, and kneeling beside it, her face buried in the pillow, was poor Mary. In his own lodgings, looking pale and haggard, as though no sleep had refreshed him during the long hours of night, was Philip Hartley. He was seated by a table, his hands supporting his head, reading a letter, which lay open before him, and Millicent was kneeling in her accustomed place in the old church, earnestly

praying that in all her troubles and adversities she might place her whole trust and confidence in God's mercy.

What was the letter which kept Philip away from his accustomed place in church—which was filling his heart with anger and disappointment—which seemed at one blow to have crushed every bright hope in this world? It ran thus:—

“Dearest Philip,—What will you say to me when you hear that I have given up, in favour of another, the situation which I thought would have enabled us to marry? I have done this, dear Philip; but don't be angry with me. I am sure you will believe I feel the disappointment as bitter as you can; but the poor Aldhams were in such trouble. Forgive me, dear Philip, and let us still go on loving and hoping for better days. Come to me as soon as you can after work, and I will explain all to you. Your ever loving till death

“MILLICENT.”

For five years, for a reason she had never told him, Millicent had refused to marry him. And now—now that that reason was removed—that no obstacle interfered to prevent their happiness, and life was opening before them with bright prospects, she herself



had wantonly cast away the means by which that happiness was to be secured—that bright prospect enjoyed.

There was more of anger in his heart than any other feeling. Wounded pride, too, tortured him. How little could she care for him if she was so ready to give him up! True, he had said that he was willing to work for them all, and so he would have done still, if through any misfortune she had lost the school; but it was her own act and deed, proving—so his anger made him think—that she cared nothing for him, nor wished to be his wife. So let it be, then; he had done with her. She should see he was not to be trifled with. And tearing her letter in a thousand pieces, he scattered it to the winds, and never left his room all day, refusing anything to eat, but drinking heavily for the first time in his life—so passed his Sabbath-day.

Millicent attended both services, and in the afternoon read to the old folks, and went about all her duties with a calmness, which was more touching than any show of grief. In the evening she asked her father if he would kindly walk as far as Philip's lodgings, for she feared he was angry, for he had neither come nor answered her letter. She had told her parents what she had done; and they, although sorry for Philip, could not help being glad that

Millicent was not to leave them; but there was poor little Susan to know it yet, and Millicent dreaded writing to her, knowing how disappointed she would be. The first excitement over, now that she had time to reflect, she felt that she had acted too hastily. She had forgotten, in the excitement of the moment, that others beside herself were concerned — that she was sacrificing Philip, who had loved her so long and truly, and that it would be no worse for the Aldhams to go to the workhouse than her little cousin, and that must be her inevitable fate if some aid was not speedily extended to her and her family. Moreover, on reflection, she feared Anne was scarcely fitted for the undertaking, and how grieved she should be if she did not after all suit. Mrs. Ponsonby would be vexed and disappointed; and, in short, Millicent thoroughly repented what she had done, as all must do when they act from impulse, not principle.

To relieve Anne from her bitter distress was all she thought of. She knew that she was sacrificing herself, but forgot that she should make others suffer also.

When her father returned, he said he had not seen Philip, but the woman of the house said he had gone to bed ill.

Almost for the first time in her life, Millicent passed an entirely sleepless night. What should she

do? Poor Philip was ill, and she feared angry, but there was no remedy that she could see. Nothing but to bear it patiently, and endeavour to profit by the lesson she had learnt—that principle, and not impulse, should be the guide of our lives.

All the next day she received no tidings of Philip; and in the evening a message came from the Vicarage, asking her to go up there. With a heavy heart she prepared to obey the summons. In all the trials of her life none had weighed on her like this, and the more, because she felt she had brought it on herself.

Mrs. Ponsonby saw at a glance that something was wrong. She missed the bright smile, which was a peculiar characteristic of Millicent's face, and felt sure that it must be something of moment which could thus have saddened that joyous expression.

"I wanted to see you, Millicent," said Mrs. Ponsonby, "again, about this school. My husband went on Saturday to see the young woman you have recommended, and he fears she will not do."

"Indeed, ma'am!" said Millicent; "I am sorry to hear that. She appeared to me to be quite the person you wanted."

"Oh, no! she seems a quiet, good, respectable person; but with so little information herself, that she could not teach others."

"But I understood you, ma'am, that it was a

school for household work, and such things as that; and I know that Anne thoroughly understands anything of that kind."

"Yes, but you see, until we get the proper school, with all its offices, we cannot put the work in practice. They can only learn from books the best and right method of doing things; and my husband tells me Anne can only read a little, and very imperfectly."

Millicent looked perplexed, but made no answer, so Mrs. Ponsonby continued:—

"The sort of person we want is one who can read and write well, and cast accounts,—for book-keeping, you know, is also to be taught,—and who has sufficient common sense, by the aid of books, to instruct the girls in such household matters as will be valuable to them in their future lives. Now, Anne Aldham is not at all the person who can do this, or one whom the girls would mind. They very soon know who can and who *cannot* teach them, and I should be sorry to have a failure at first starting."

"Yes; that would be a pity, ma'am, certainly."

"Well, what is to be done, Millicent? Can we not go back to our first arrangement? There is no reason for you refusing to be mistress, but what is possible to be removed surely?"

Millicent paused before she answered, and then said,—

"I will honestly tell you the only reason, ma'am. Anne Aldham must go to the workhouse, or starve, unless she finds some situation: I can go on as I have done."

"You mean to say, it was simply to serve her that you gave this up?"

"I had no other motive certainly, ma'am."

"And is it true that it would have enabled you to marry, as I have heard, and that now your marriage is again delayed?"

"We have waited a long time," said Millicent, in a low voice, as her colour mounted to her temples, "we must wait a little longer."

"I see all about it. You are a good, kind, generous creature, Millicent; but you must be my school-mistress, nevertheless. I shall say nothing more to you now; but only consider it settled that, as soon as possible, you start as mistress of the Training-School. Anne Aldham shall not go to the workhouse, you may depend on that."

There were tears in Mrs. Ponsonby's eyes as she rapidly uttered all this, and, wringing Millicent's hand warmly, she hurried her away.

Millicent walked home with a lighter step than she came, for hope again began to dawn in her heart. Again she could picture herself the happy wife of Philip Hartley, managing his home, and striving to

render it the best-ordered and prettiest home in all the village; and she could see the flowers blooming in the neat, well-kept garden, and a few of the brightest plants in pots in the window in the sweet summer time; and the fire in the winter gleaming on the ceiling, and on all the shining covers and tins, which it would be her pride to keep bright—so bright. And all this she was busy thinking, when she was suddenly recalled to herself by seeing a figure advancing towards her, that made her heart beat and her face flush. Surely he did not see her; for there was no smile of recognition nor glance of pleasure. Still faster beat her heart as he neared her—yet without a smile. Every inch of the way seemed a mile,—but now only a few yards divide them,—the sweet smile, which at first sight of him had lightened up her face, was fading like the last gleam of daylight, chased away by the tears which gathered in her eyes, and soon fell thick and fast over her burning cheeks,—burning with mingled feelings of bitter sorrow and hurt pride,—for he has passed her—passed her without a sign! She knew not how she got home, or how she found herself with her head buried on her mother's bosom, sobbing there as much, and with far more bitterness than in her childish days, when she had sought there, where she was so sure to find it, sympathy for her childish griefs.

Yes, the brave-hearted Millicent, who had borne cheerfully the burdens which she had hitherto had to carry, and had helped others to bear theirs by her cheering example, had broken down now! and she clung round her mother with a helpless, hopeless feeling, as new as it was painful to her. The poor old woman, who for so many years now had looked to her child for comfort and support, scarcely knew how to act in the reversed position; but it seemed to recall to her mind her little baby Millicent, and so she tried to comfort her, as in those days long ago, with words of soft encouragement, and stroking her hair and kissing her, wondering all the time what had thus disturbed her brave, light-hearted child.

All poor Millicent kept saying through her sobs was,—“I have known and loved him so long! how could he? how could he?”

But at length, the paroxysm over, her strong sense came to her aid and she struggled against her tears, and, rising from her position, kissed her mother, and said how sorry she was she had been so silly, and that now she must tell her all about it,—how angry Philip was at her giving up the school, and how she had done so only for poor Anne's sake; and that now Mrs. Ponsonby had made her promise that she would not give it up, for Anne was not the sort

of person, and that she was coming home, so pleased to be able to tell Philip it was all right,—and he had passed her,—actually passed her!

“However, dear mother,” she continued, “I have had my silly fit out, and now I must bustle about and forget it; and if Philip won’t speak to me any more, why I can’t help it. I must do my best in the school, and try to forget him, I suppose;” and poor Millicent sighed sadly as she spoke. .

“Well, my dear, if he could be unkind to you, he ain’t the man I took him for; but, rely on it, he’ll come round, and then he just will be sorry he behaved so foolish! Now, you sit down and I’ll get supper to-night. Father will be glad of his, for he’s been at work this afternoon, you know!”

“Yes, mother, at the Squire’s; I heard him say he was going to do a bit of weeding: I dare say he will be glad of his supper, and it’s what he likes, too,—potatoes and buttermilk. I’ll get it, thank you, mother; it will do me good to move about a little.”

And so she busied herself in these household matters, and then went early to bed, calming herself with the thought that all things were ordered, and that it was better to bear troubles patiently, for the very effort to be patient had a good effect by giving the mind something to do; and so, committing herself to Him who judgeth righteously, and Who pities and helps



us in all, even our most trivial vexations, she lay down to sleep with the hope that, "though weariness endured for the night, joy would come in the morning."

And Philip, what of him?—what were his feelings?—none of the peace of mind which Millicent felt was his, for anger was turning to gall every gentler and holier thought; and to make the poor woman, who had loved him so faithfully, suffer for this one oversight she had committed, occupied his mind to the exclusion of all besides: but we must not judge him too hardly, bad as this sounds. For many years, for some mysterious reason, which Millicent would not tell him, he had been compelled to wait for the girl he had chosen for his wife,—he had waited patiently, uncomplainingly, not given her up as many would perhaps, and now, when all obstacles seemed removed, and he thought that in a few more weeks he could claim his wife and settle down in the happy home he had looked forward to so long, she had voluntarily dashed all those bright hopes to the ground. As men always do, he argued at once that she could not love him; they are so accustomed to the sacrifices which women make for them, that they do not believe in their affection, unless every other feeling gives way for it; and that Millicent should have made this great sacrifice of herself for any one but him, made him at once jump to the conclusion, that he held

but a secondary place in her affections; so that at this moment he was suffering as much from injured self-love as any other feeling, and he lay down that night, not to sleep in peaceful trust of better things to come, but to lie awake torturing himself with thoughts of the indifference of the woman he had loved so long and truly.

## CHAPTER VI.

" And is he gone ? On sudden solitude  
How oft that fearful question will intrude ! "

*Coroner.*

THE next morning Millicent awoke with the painful sense of something being wrong, and very different from the accustomed bright face was the sad and thoughtful one at which her parents anxiously gazed ; but Millicent had that good receipt for a heart ill at ease, plenty to do. Idleness is not only the root of all evil, but the encourager of all melancholy, and active employment, business which must be done, the best preservative against indulgence in fruitless sorrow.

In the course of the day Anne Aldham came to see her, to tell her that Mrs. Ponsonby had sent for her, and told her very kindly and gently that she would not suit for the mistress of the school, but that she required so much work done that it was quite worth her while to pay a person regularly to do it.

"She said," Anne continued, "in such a nice kind way, that I was to consider myself an out-door servant of hers, ready to assist her in any way that she would require me, and, therefore, she should hire me at five shillings a-week for as long as I liked; and better than that even, she says that a friend of hers wants a nursery-governess, and she fancies that poor dear Mary will be just the thing for it, and she is going to write about her this very evening. Oh, she is a nice lady, Millicent; she has cheered me up so, for she spoke so nicely and so good; her gentle angel-face makes one think of heaven to look at it, and her soft, kind voice—I shall have them always before me, and think of them when I am down-hearted."

"But you won't be down-hearted any more, Anne, now, I hope? How is poor Mary?"

"A little better; but the funeral's the day after to-morrow, and I dread that. She's never said anything to me about mourning; I don't know how she's to get any, poor girl! for I spent all we could spare on her wedding-clothes that was to be, the half-finished gown she was so busy at looks so sad."

"Ah, poor girl! but he loved her to the last, Anne."

Anne looked up suddenly at her friend, for the tone of voice was unusually sad in which she uttered these words; but, seeing Anne's hasty glance, she quickly changed the subject and began to speak of the

school and of Mrs. Ponsonby, and how she had pressed her to take it.

"Ah, that is much better, Millicent; you are much fitter for it than I am."

"I don't know that, dear; it's the book-keeping, arithmetic, and writing, that Mrs. Ponsonby is so anxious to have taught, which makes her choose me instead of you; for, I dare say, you said you knew nothing of it. I did not understand at first that was needed."

"No more I do know anything about it, Millicent; and you're quite the best person, and I'm very glad you're going to have it. Will the old folks go with you?"

"No; they will stay here, Anne."

And Millicent proceeded to tell her what arrangement she had made; and long as they talked about it, Anne left the cottage perfectly unaware of the sacrifice Millicent had wished to make for her, and all the sorrow it had in consequence brought upon her. As soon as Anne was gone Millicent began to prepare for dinner, and had only just got the things ready to make a pudding, when Mrs. Ward came.

"I wanted to speak to you, but I see you're busy, Millicent."

"I can attend to you and make the pudding, too, Mrs. Ward, if you don't mind."

"Oh, I don't mind! I wanted just to ask you a

question ; they tell me you're such a one at altering and turning things ; and, as you was so good as to say that you would do anything in the way of work for me, I thought, maybe, you'd tell me how to manage with these ;" and she produced a bundle from under her shawl.

"A lady where we used to live before, as was always very kind to us, sent me this lot of clothes ; but, there, I don't know what good they be, for none of them will fit my children ; and unless you can alter them, or at least tell me how, I think I'd best sell 'em to some one they will fit."

"Let me see them, Mrs. Ward ; I should think, as you've children of all sizes, we might make some of it do."

Mrs. Ward opened the bundle, and displayed a merino cloak of an old-fashioned, long shape, lined and wadded ; several long-cloth under-garments : the body of a dark silk dress ; several pair of old cotton stockings ; and some eight or ten yards of plum-coloured riband.

"Well now, to begin with, Mrs. Ward, that cloak is stained round the bottom with mud ; and that is all that is the matter there. Why not pick it to pieces and turn it, thoroughly well brush it, cut off the stains at the bottom, and then it will make as pretty and useful a frock as you can have for your second girl. The lining will do quite well again, and the wadding

we will turn to some other account. The long-cloth petticoats have nothing the matter with them but ragged hems: cut off and re-hemmed, they will be quite long enough for your two eldest girls,—two a-piece for them; and the rest will make a set of little shirts for the baby: they're a bad colour with being put by, but only want bleaching to look as good as new. This body, picked to pieces, and sponged and ironed, will make a very pretty little drawn bonnet for baby; the hooks of it will go on the frock, and the lining cut for the body. My hands are all floury, but you can put yours into the stockings to see if they want mending. Oh, yes, a little, but that is soon done."

"Yes, but then you see they're too big for any of the children, and too little for me."

"That's all the better; cut the toes off where they are in holes, and sew them up again to the size of the foot you want. Then this riband is very good, only it has lost its colour, turned red, as that colour always will; you dip it in soda and water, and iron it, and you won't know it from new, and then it will trim the two girls' bonnets."

"Well, I never saw such a one as you are in my life," said Mrs. Ward; "I should have puzzled my head for a month before I could have told what to do with these things. I should have worn the cloak, perhaps, in wet weather, and the petticoats and all

the rest I should have flung away if I couldn't have sold them."

"I think you'll find my plan best, Mrs. Ward; and if you'll let me, I'll make this frock, and I think when you see it, you won't believe it was once an old cloak."

"Well, thank you, I should be obliged if it ain't any ill-convenience to you."

"None in the least, I'll do it with pleasure."

"Thank you! then I'll leave that."

"But I think you might employ some of your little ones to unpick it, and the silk body, too, and then I will make the bonnet as well, for perhaps that would puzzle you."

"That it just would; but I really don't like troubling you; and indeed you shan't do it unless you'll let me do some washing or something for you."

"Well, you shall come and give me a day's washing one day soon, if that will ease your conscience," answered Millicent, smiling; "but I assure you it is a pleasure to me to be of service, and needs no further reward."

"You said something about bleaching the calico: I don't know how to do that."

"Don't you? Oh, it is very easy: you must wash the things in soft water, with a great deal of



stone blue in it, and then lay them out on some grass for two days, watering them occasionally with a watering-pot; then wash them thoroughly in some good suds, and you will find them a capital colour."

"Well, I'll try that, certainly; then I've got to wash these things, and make 'em up for baby, and the two girls; and you'll be kind enough to do the bonnet and frock."

"Yes, I'll see to that. What sort of frock is your girl wearing now? I fancied she had a Saxony cloth on that looked rather old."

"Yes, she had, and it is shabby, surely."

"Well, if you will let her wear her Sunday one every day, and pick her old one to pieces, and wash it, it will make her a warm winter petticoat; and if I were you I should use this wadding for it, it wouldn't cost much, a little bit of lining to go over it."

"Ah, true, that would be nice! Well, you are a clever one, I must say! But I won't hinder you any more now; be sure and let me help you if I can. Good day! and thank you."

"Good day, Mrs. Ward; I'll try and get the frock done by Sunday."

And Mrs. Ward departed, and left Millicent still busy preparing the dinner, for she took a great delight in getting nice little dinners ready for her poor old parents; who gazed on her with wonder and admi-

ration at the manner in which she managed at very small expense always to have some nice hot meal prepared for them. A sheep's head made them several cheap dinners, and certainly far more savoury ones than bread; but she could not persuade her poor neighbours of this; yet had they seen the nice meal the Rays were sitting down to of the remains of the head, liver, and tongue, made into a capital pudding, with potatoes and onions in it, and the nice glass of skim milk for each of them to drink, they would surely have been convinced that this was more comfortable, more economical, and more nourishing than the weak tea, without milk, and the bread and bad butter or cheese, which constituted the sole dinner of the hard-working labourer in almost every cottage in the village.

Dinner was scarcely cleared away when Millicent saw a little boy coming down the garden with a letter in his hand. She went eagerly to take it from him, for something seemed to tell her it was from Philip. She was not wrong in her conjecture, but she could scarcely believe her eyes when she read the contents.

“By the time you receive this I shall be in London, preparing to go on board the *Eagle*, bound for Melbourne. I do not know if it will interest you to hear this, but I have written on the chance that you

may care to know what has become of one who, in spite of all, must sign himself

“Your affectionate lover,

“PHILIP HARTLEY.”

The room seemed to swim with her as she read this startling communication; but she made a great effort to be calm, and to think soberly and steadily what this meant, and what was to be done; so, in a calm voice, she said to her mother,—

“To-day is Tuesday; is it not, mother?”

“Yes, my dear, I think so.”

“The 3d of September. I must see a newspaper, so I will just go over to the Star and look at ‘The Times.’ I shall not be gone long.”

“Is anything the matter, dear?”

“A little, mother. Read that while I am gone;” and, putting the letter in her mother’s hand, she went out to the inn to ask for the paper.

She was soon back.

“The Eagle does not sail till the 8th, mother. I think I shall go to London and try to get on board, and see Philip.”

“I’m sure I wouldn’t;—the good-for-nothing fellow! I’d let him go. I haven’t common patience with him! Have nothing to do with him, I say!”

“Mother, we have loved too long to speak like this.”

"Well, true, my dear; but I really don't think father will like you going to London by yourself. Why, it be such a terrible dangerous place!"

"I'm not afraid, mother; and I'm quite old enough, and ugly enough," she said, with a faint attempt at a smile, "to take care of myself."

"Well, I be only a poor old woman, and haven't much recollection, perhaps, of such matters; but it seems to me if my man had served me so, I'd see him a step farther than London, or Australy either, before I'd go after him!"

"We won't talk about it any more, mother dear, to-night; many things may happen before then to prevent my going."

"Ah, poor dear! very true, very true! I haven't common patience!" again muttered the poor old woman, throwing down the letter on the table.

Millicent took it, read it again, folded it up, placed it in her bosom, and went out into the porch; and other drops beside the dew were soon glistening among the rose-leaves.

## CHAPTER VII.

“ There lies no desert in the track of life ;  
For e'en that tract that barrenest doth seem,  
Labour'd of thee, in faith and hope shall teem,  
With heavenly harvest and rich gatherings rife.”

F. KEMBLE'S *Poems*.

MRS. PONSONBY was, day by day, gradually gaining strength, confirming her husband in his bright, hopeful aspirations, so that now her Bath-chair might be seen before many a cottage-door, while she sat within talking kindly to the women, playing with the children, and bringing, for the time she stayed, at least, hope and cheerfulness to all. She made these efforts principally for her school's sake ; she so wished the mothers to understand the full advantages of it, and to show them how immeasurably they would gain by having their daughters properly instructed in the domestic arts so useful to them. With such gentle earnestness she urg'd this, till almost persuaded, they

promised to "think of it." Some said, *to oblige her!* their girls should go; they could not imagine such zeal and earnestness was only for their sakes, and so thought it a favour done to her to spare the girls to school.

In one cottage she entered there was a child about thirteen, looking so pale and ill, that she inquired at once what ailed her.

"Well, mum, she's hurted herself somehow; over-lifting, I expect. She's been a month or two at Hill Farm, and had too much to do, she tells me she felt a kind of strain lifting an iron pot off the fire, and she's never been just right ever since."

"I should think not, indeed! But, Mrs. Mason, she is far too young for such heavy work. Can you not afford to keep her at home? she could learn many things in your cottage fitted to her age and strength, and you could see she did nothing beyond it."

"Well, true, but they must get out and earn their bread: it's their turn now."

"I quite agree with you that each child in a family should be made to earn something, but only in proportion to their strength. Have you had advice for her?"

"No, not the doctor. I got some stuff from the shop for her, but she ain't no better."

"What was it?"

"Oh, I don't know! something of a physicky nature; but she kept on taking it, and it never did her any good, as I could see, and I left it off. I have thought of asking Millicent Ray to step in and look at her."

"She seems to be everybody's doctor," said Mrs. Ponsonby, smiling.

"Well, yes, ma'am, she's very clever in doctoring. What she orders most time does good. I don't know where she picked her learning up."

"Why, at a very good school: she went to such a one as I want to have here. Have you seen the Prospectus?"

"The paper about it? Oh, yes, ma'am; at least my master has, I believe. I see him last night reading something."

"Well, I hope you will try, if you can, to send some of your children when it is open; for, indeed, you will find it more beneficial than sending them to service, though it may cost a little at the time. I think your poor little girl ought to have more colour in those cheeks, and you must let me send my doctor to know what is to be done to bring back the roses."

"Thank you, ma'am, but doctors most times orders what poor folks can't have."

"What he orders, I will see your little girl does have."

"Thank you, ma'am."

"Can she read and write?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am, pretty fairly; she was at school here a long time, but I thought she was getting a'most too big."

"Well, you must send her to my school when it is open, for that is entirely for the bigger girls. Good morning."

When Mrs. Ponsonby reached home she was very tired, and her husband, meeting her at the gate, tried to look angry with her, but it was not an expression that he seemed ever able to call into his face; at any rate, any effort of the kind only made Edith laugh, and so he often said he must give up trying; but he did now say she was very naughty, and that she never should go out again without him, and he carried her to the sofa, and would not hear a word she had to say until she had taken a large glass of port wine, and been very still for ten minutes. Then he allowed her to tell him what she had been doing; and after warning her not to be too sanguine, or expect more than three or four girls at first, he proceeded to tell her that he had something to show her which he hoped would please her; and ringing the bell, he ordered a box, which he said was in his study, to be brought in.

This he placed on a chair, that she might open it herself, and watched with delight her face of pleasure



as she saw the contents. It was full of books, slates, pens, and pencils for the schools.

"That looks like business, darling; doesn't it?"

"It does, indeed, Edward. How good of you to order them; indulging me in my whim of having a thing done the moment I think of it. I must say that is what I like."

"Then you will like to know that the plasterers and carpenters are going into the house to-morrow to get the room to look more like a school-room, and less like a kitchen, and that the forms and desks are being made."

"I do like to know it, indeed; it is just like you to spoil your little wife."

"Nonsense!" he said, stooping down to kiss the face uplifted to his. "I think," he continued, "it would be very nice if we could open it on the 29th, and call it the St. Michael's Training School for Domestic Servants."

"Yes; if Millicent will be ready, I have no objection—the sooner the better."

"Well, we will see about it. I have been to see the Aldhams to-day. You seem to have put poor Anne into very good spirits by your arrangement; but Mary is very sad still. Mason is to be buried to-morrow."

"Is he related to the Masons I went to to-day?"

"I think not; it's a common name in this village. I understand his master is going to pay for the funeral, and that the body is to be brought to church in a waggon covered with black cloth, drawn by the team he used to drive, with black trappings. Six of the farm-labourers to be bearers, and the rest to follow."

"I'm glad of that; I think it was due to him. I have sent poor Mary a suit of mourning; for I thought she would like to wear black for him, and to follow him to his last resting-place, poor fellow!"

"That was very thoughtful of you, dear; but I have one or two more things to do before dinner; so good-bye for the present."

"Where are you going, then?"

"To discover some old man who would like to earn a little money by keeping the churchyard in order, and especially to be the terror of little boys who will run over the graves."

"You will easily find one, I should think. Has not Millicent an old father?"

"Yes; but he is paralysed, and therefore I do not know if he would do. However, I will see; good-bye."

## CHAPTER VIII

"This world is but the rugged road  
That leads us to the bright abode  
Of Peace above :  
So let us choose that narrow way  
Which leads no traveller's foot astray  
From realms of love."—LONGFELLOW.

AND the morning dawned—the bright, clear September morning. There had been a slight frost, but the warm sun had melted it, and now it was hanging amongst the leaves and branches in drops as bright as gems. How many had looked forward to that day—counted the hours, which went all too slow till that day should come on which so much of happiness depended; children, for some promised treat; men, for some great undertaking, which might influence their future lives; and tender, loving women, for the completion of their happiness, in making them the wives of those to whom they had given their hearts. And some there were who had dreaded its coming, and to whom its bright sunshine seemed only a mockery—a day on which there were to be partings for

years, it might be for ever—a day on which some long-loved home must be resigned to strangers—a day on which the crisis of some life was to be decided, or some beloved form consigned to its last earthly resting-place.

There were many persons even in the small village of Wetherley to whom that bright morning brought no joy. Amongst them, heart-broken Mary Aldham and Millicent Ray. It had been a kind of comfort to poor Mary to sit beside Robert's body, in silent, earnest contemplation of those features so dear to her; but now the day had come when that comfort was to be taken from her, when she could never more on earth see that dear face, or patiently watch beside that motionless form. And Millicent woke with the sunshine streaming into her bedroom, to know that Philip had left his home and her for ever. There was no *earthly* comfort for either of them.

But Millicent did not in her own sorrow forget the troubles of others; and as soon, therefore, as she could, went down to the Aldhams to see if she could be of use to them.

Anne was very glad to see her, for Mary was very bad she said, and she did not know what to say to comfort her.

“But did you ever know anything so kind as Mrs. Ponsonby? she has sent her such a beautiful suit of mourning. Poor girl, she burst out crying when

saw it, and said, 'God bless her! I can follow him now decently to his grave.' I think she'll be better after to-day."

"Oh! yes; no doubt she will."

As they spoke, the door of the inner room opened, and Mary, in her deep mourning, entered. There was little more said amongst them, till the tolling of the bell gave warning that it was time for Mary to go, she shuddered slightly, but said in reply to her sister's anxious glance,—

"I shall do very well, dear; George is coming for me."

Anne and Millicent went to the door with her, where George Mason was in waiting, and watched her up the street, and then, returning to the sitting-room, talked in hushed voices till she returned, and her agonised sobbing gave them for some time ample occupation.

Millicent advised Anne to let this natural grief have way for a time; and then she began to talk to her in that calm, low, soothing voice that was so comforting, and spoke of the blessedness of the dead, of his safety from care and temptation, and of the joyous reunion which one day awaited them, till she succeeded at length in calming the violence of poor Mary's sorrow, and in some measure consoling her.

When Millicent returned home again, she found

Mrs. Ponsonby waiting to see her. She had come to ask her if she should be ready to open school on the 29th. She said she thought so; but the only difficulty was furniture.

"Will not the gentleman bring that?" said Mrs. Ponsonby, smiling.

"I am not going to be married, ma'am," said Millicent, turning away her head and speaking in a low voice.

"Indeed! do not think me impertinent for asking; but is there anything wrong? anything in which I can assist you or comfort you?"

"I think not, thank you!" was all Millicent could utter.

"Do not be afraid to tell me," said Mrs. Ponsonby, more earnestly; "as the wife of your pastor, it is my province to aid and comfort you if I can; and sometimes it is such a comfort to speak to those who can and will sympathise with us."

The kind, gentle voice was too much for her, and Millicent could not answer for the tears which choked her; at length she said,—

"He was very angry with me for first refusing the school, and he is gone—is going, at least,—to Australia!"

"Oh! but we can't have that," said Mrs. Ponsonby, kindly and cheerfully; "depend on it that

is a little temper which will all pass over,—if he is not gone, he will not go! Where is he now?"

"In London, ma'am; but I don't know when nor where to write to him. I think of going up to London and trying to get on board the ship, to see and speak to him once again."

"He will never go on board,—he will never leave you in such a manner, I feel sure. I wish you could answer his letter, certainly; but do you not think his master could tell you something of him?"

"I never thought of that, ma'am; perhaps he could."

"Well, then, go over to-morrow early and see what he has to say about it; and then come to me, and we will consult again about what is best to be done."

"Thank you, ma'am; you are very kind!"

"Only cheer up about it," continued Mrs. Ponsonby, "and rely on it I shall see you ere long comfortably settled in my school-house. I shall not worry you with any more school business, however, now, for I'm sure you have enough on your mind; but I sincerely hope it is a cloud which will soon pass, and make it all look brighter afterwards for the momentary gloom. God bless you!"

"God bless *you*, ma'am! and thank you for your sympathy."

“If,” said Mrs. Ponsonby, as she wrung Millicent’s hand warmly, “my husband can comfort or advise you in this or any other trouble, send for him; he wishes his parishioners to look on him as their friend, ready and willing, day or night, to come to them when they require him.”

“If—if this affair—that is, if I never see Philip again, I shall be very grateful to Mr. Ponsonby to come and talk to me, for I fear I shall not be very patient,” answered Millicent.

The tears were welling up again into her eyes, so Mrs. Ponsonby turned away with only one more pressure of her hand, which spoke, as it meant to do, of her earnest and entire sympathy.

When Mrs. Ponsonby reached home, after telling her husband of Millicent’s sorrows, and listening to his account of the funeral of poor Mason, she asked him to come with her to her sitting-room, as she had something to show him; and, arrived there, she displayed some texts, admirably written in illuminated letters on large strips of card, which she said she intended to be hung round the school-room; as yet she had only done two, but she intended to have six; the two completed were:—

“Gather up the fragments that remain that nothing be lost.”



“Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things, not answering again.”

The four others were to be:—

“For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.”

“In like manner also that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but, which becometh women professing godliness, with good works.”

“Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children.”

“And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

“What do you think of them, dear?” asked Mrs. Ponsonby.

“Why I think them very well done indeed, and quite worthy a place in my little wife’s model school.”

“I’m glad to hear it, sir,” she answered playfully; “now tell me all you have done, and if you have succeeded in getting an old man for what you want.”

“Yes, I think I have one that will just suit; such

a nice old fellow! and he is delighted. He is on the parish, has half-a-crown a week now, and is therefore very well satisfied with the six shillings I offer him."

"Is it the same you heard of last night?"

"Yes, the same."

"Well, what else have you done?"

"Been to read to old Betty; and called on Mrs. Bateman, to see about her child being christened, and she had such a tremendous long tale to tell me that I've been nowhere else."

"I don't know her; what sort of person is she?"

"Oh, much like all about here: with the same kind of notions which are so difficult to combat. I have been endeavouring to make her see how much she might save by a different mode of spending her money; how perfectly possible it would be to save a little each week out of their wages, and also to send one or two children to school; but I only get that provoking 'may-be' in answer, without producing the slightest impression."

"Well, dear, we must go on persevering and trying, and in time, I trust, we shall make them see their own advantage better."

"I trust so. I'm sure better-managed cottage homes would empty the public-houses sooner than anything. If the tired labouring man was sure of a cheerful, orderly room, with a comfortable meal,

nically prepared, they would far rather, many of them, stay there than seek for such comfort in the beer-shop. So few of the women in that class of life study the *comfort* of their husbands, they drag on an existence somehow, but without any fixed rule of conduct, any strong sense of duty."

"Very true; and do you not think that is because matrimony is not considered as a 'holy estate;' its importance is not sufficiently felt; and the mothers do not impress on their children how grave the step is they are going to take?"

"Because they have not felt it themselves. I have a notion in my mind for a lecture on the subject to be delivered in your school, when there are a sufficient number of scholars."

"I think it would be a very good subject, indeed, dear; I hope I shall be able to come and hear it."

"I hope so, too, darling. I think you will often come to your school when once it has started, and I trust poor Millicent's love-story will not render her unequal to the task, or unable to open the school on the 29th."

"No, I hope not, poor thing; but I must go now, and seek for some work for Anne Aldham, for I must make a pretence of employing her. I should not like her to imagine that I give her the money in charity."

"Certainly not, love. I have some letters to write, so if you want me I am in the study. I should like you to come and sit there, if you did not much object."

"I'll try and put up with it," she said, smiling.

"Then I'll have your couch wheeled in there."

"Yes, if you please, dear; I can't get on quite without that yet, I fear."

And away he went eagerly to arrange ~~her~~ couch in the pleasantest nook in his pleasant study.

## CHAPTER IX.

“ And let rich music’s tongue  
Unfold the imagined happiness that both  
Receive in either by this dear encounter.”

*Romeo and Juliet.*

EARLY the next morning Millicent started for Alringford. Philip’s master was at home and saw her directly : he told her that some time ago he had spoken to Philip about going to Melbourne where a friend of his was established, who required workmen, that he offered large wages ; and as he considered Philip an excellent hand and worth encouragement, he had suggested, though very sorry to lose him, that he should go to Australia. At first Philip had refused ; but on Monday last he came to his master, and said that he should like to alter his mind and to go to Australia at once.

“ I knew,” he continued, “ that a ship was going to sail on the 8th, and that my friend was in a hurry for men, and so I let him go, but I regret him every

moment: he was my best hand. Where he is now I cannot tell you; but I should imagine in some lodgings near the Docks. He promised to write to me on his arrival, but I do not expect to hear till then."

With this scanty and to her useless information Millicent was obliged to be content, and to return home much as she came. A long walk alone is never very pleasant, how much worse when the mind is full of painful thoughts; and yet it was a pretty walk, too, and had her thoughts been unoccupied, she might have enjoyed even alone the pleasant fields through which her way lay. Some of them, in which the turf was so velvety and pleasant to walk on,—some in which, on either side the path, grew luxuriant crops of corn, being cut now and standing in shocks, beneath which, on a bundle of shawls or a coat, sat some baby, whose mother had come up with "father's" dinner, and was standing to chat with a group of men, looking picturesque enough with their coloured handkerchiefs wound about their heads and their reaping-hooks in their hands. In one or two fields a second crop of hay was being carried, and they were gay with women and children, whose merry voices rang in the clear air. Sometimes a loud whirr would startle the passer-by, as a covey of young birds would get up, and now and then a lark would rise and soar far in the blue sky—its little throat bursting with its loud har-

monious song ; wild-flowers in abundance were mingling their graceful forms with the sturdy thorn in the hedges, and all spoke of the merciful and watchful Providence, who made all things, and saw that they were good. At any other time Millicent would have enjoyed all these pleasant sights and sounds : but they were lost upon her now, she only remembered who last was with her on that same road, and her eyes filled with blinding tears as she thought that never should they walk there again.

Never ! its very sound is like a funeral bell, knelling for the destruction of every bright hope, every fond anticipation.

The days went slowly by, but nothing was heard of Philip. Millicent exerted herself to do the work she had promised for Mrs. Ward, and was repaid by the woman's genuine delight at the pretty little frock and bonnet she produced, who could scarcely believe she had made them out of the old cloak and body.

Hearing nothing of Philip, she determined that on the 7th she would go to London, and had made all preparations for her departure ; for though her parents were loth to let her go, she was not, of course, of an age to be controlled. The evening before, she was busy in her own room, when she was startled by a man's voice in the garden calling her name. It was a

voice she knew, and yet for the moment she could not recall it; but the house-door was soon opened, and the voice called again, "Ship, ahoy! halloa there! Who's alive?" Then a loud cry from her mother of "My boy, my boy!" left her in doubt no longer, and flying down, she was soon wrapt in her brother's hearty embrace. For a few moments nothing went on but kissings and blessings; the poor old parents crying for joy over their darling boy. Questions poured out on all sides, and at length it was discovered that a letter had been written that had never been received, stating that he had a month's leave as his ship was in harbour, and he should be with them in a day or two.

"Well, never mind," he said, "about the letter; here am I all right. How well you're all looking, except you, Millicent; I can't say so much about you. Your figure-head would be better for a coat of paint, old girl. But, I say, I've got a mate outside; may I bring him in? Eh! mother? eh! father?"

"Yes, lad; any friend o' thine we're glad to see."

"Then I'll go and fetch him." And away he started.

"This is a surprise," said Mrs. Ray, wiping the tears of joy which had gathered in her eyes; "is it not, Millicent?"



"It is, indeed, mother. Dear Willie, he's looking so well."

"How did he come, I wonder?"

"Oh! by the half-past three o'clock train from London, you may depend; he's walked from the station. Here's his luggage," said Millicent, smiling, and pointing to a bundle on a hook stick, which he had flung down on first entering the room.

He was not gone long. Millicent was bending down lighting the fire to prepare some hot supper for him when he returned. He opened the door very softly this time; but an exclamation from her mother caused her to look round, and there, by her brother's side, stood Philip Hartley!

"Now, my hearty," said Willie, clapping him on the back, "go alongside of her; don't be afraid. Forget and forgive, that's my motto. You're on the right tack, depend on it, while you stick to that."

Philip walked up to her and held out his hand; she took it silently, but raised to his face a glance of mingled love and reproach, that spoke far more all she had felt and suffered than any words could have done.

Willie, throwing one arm round each of his parents, drew them aside, rattling out a quantity of nonsense in nautical phraseology, so as completely to drown the low tones of the lovers.

"I am come, Millicent," said Philip, still holding her hand, "to tell you I am sorry for my foolish, hasty conduct—to ask you to forgive me, and to prove you do by letting me work for you and the old folks too. Don't say no, Millicent; pray, pray don't, or I shall think you are still angry with me. I cannot think, as I did a day or two back, that you don't love me now; your face tells a different tale. But say yes, like a dear creature, and let us end for ever these foolish misunderstandings."

"You did wrong me, Philip, very much," she answered; "but I do forgive you heartily, though I cannot say Yes quite as you wish me."

"Now, Millicent ——"

"Stay a bit; you shall work for me if you will," she answered, with a sweet, loving smile; "but not for the old folks, for the school opens on the 29th, and Millicent Ray is the mistress."

"My darling! I'm glad and sorry both—sorry because I cannot repair my late faults; but, rely on it, I'll do my best to make you a good husband. And so as soon as you like, Millicent Hartley shall be the mistress of the school."

And so, with faces more glad and bright than had been seen there for many a long day, a party sat down that evening to their supper, whose happiness, in their

humble cottage-home, might have been envied by the richest in the land.

"Now," said Willie, towards the conclusion of the meal, "I'm sure you all want to know how it was I fell in with this chap," pointing to Hartley, "so now I'll tell you. I'd just come up from Sheerness in a tug with two or three of my mates, and was sailing along at sixteen knots an hour down one of them crowded streets by London Bridge, when this fellow suddenly hove in sight. 'What ship's that?' thinks I; 'I should know the cut of her jib, I'm sure.' Well, as soon as I got alongside of him, I said, 'Philip Hartley, my man, how are you?' He did not know me, not a bit of it; but I soon made him understand who I was, and in less than ten minutes, found out all about him and how it was he got there. He looked glum enough, 'but,' says I, 'alter your course, my lad; you've got all wrong. I'm homeward bound, come along with me;' and luckily he hadn't taken his berth, and away we came together. He wanted but little persuasion; it was the black dog that had got on him, and the sooner it was shoved overboard the better."

"Ah! now I'm here with her," said Philip, "I quite shudder when I think that by this time to-morrow night I might have been miles away from her,

never to see her again. Millicent, we must have many happy years for this."

"To be sure; you shall be asked next Sunday, and I shall be on shore to dance at your wedding. Won't I give you a hornpipe?"

"Aye, aye, lad, we must see that," said the old man, laughing heartily; "and we'll have a rare gay wedding, depend on't."

And now the days did roll quickly and happily away; the old folks were never weary of "the yarns" which their dear boy spun, and religiously believed all his marvellous tales of mermaids, sea monsters, and terrific storms, while Philip and Millicent discussed and arranged their plans for the future.

And Mrs. Ponsonby was in great spirits, charmed at the favourable turn affairs had taken with respect to the lovers, and at the approaching accomplishment of her cherished plan. She had been down to superintend the arrangements in the school-room, and no child with a new doll's house could have looked more delighted than she did, as she surveyed the clean whitewashed walls, the new rows of pegs at one end for the girls' bonnets, the deal forms, and desks, and book-shelves, the table and chair by the fireplace for the mistress, the large black board—everything, in short, complete for the commencement of her school.

The day before it was to open, she went down

again to see the texts put up and some handsome maps hung on the walls which she had purchased, and then felt perfectly satisfied with its appearance.

The rest of the house was not to be furnished until the wedding. Millicent was to go home to sleep until then, and over-hours Philip worked indefatigably at different articles of furniture for the new home, to which he looked forward with intense delight.

Susan was to come on the 27th, to be ready for her duties, and to be put in the way a little before Millicent left. And with a very bright face, early in the morning, Susan arrived. Most anxious to learn her new duties, she followed Millicent everywhere, and asked a reason for everything she did, which Willie delighted in giving her, greatly to the confusion of the poor girl, who could not imagine he was joking, from the grave face with which he imparted his wonderful information.

"Millicent, why have you put those bones in the saucepan?"

"Don't you know?" answered Willie. "To make glue, to be sure."

"Is it, Millicent?"

"Not exactly; to make some soup more likely."

"Soup of bones?"

"To be sure. I was going to tell you how to do it. You must put them on the fire in a saucepan

with very little water—cold water—and an onion or two, and let them boil up for a few minutes, and then stand on the side of the fire to simmer a few hours, pour the liquor off and let it stand till it's cold, then take the fat off, and it's fit for use; and capital soup it makes too. It's generally in a firm jelly when cold. Then I get a few vegetables, carrots and turnips—about two-pennor'th—and boil them, and cut them up in the soup when I want to use it, or a little macaroni, or some slices of stale bread fried and cut up in it, and we like no dinner better."

"And what do you do with the fat?"

"Oh! that makes grease for her hair," said Willie.

"Nonsense, Willie! I'm sure she doesn't do that; do you, Millicent?"

"No, Susan; I use it for frying or making pudding-crust. Now, look here, I have written down how I managed for one week about the food just as a guide for you:—

"*Sunday.* Breast of mutton, rolled and roasted, costing about eleven-pence—potatoes done under the meat. *Monday.* Remains of mutton cut up and warmed, with some soup made from bones last week. *Tuesday.* Remains of soup and suet-pudding. Suet costing twopence. *Wednesday.* Ox-cheek, costing sixpence, baked with potatoes. *Thursday.* Remains

of ox-cheek, hasty-pudding. *Friday.* Potato-pudding. *Saturday.* Soup of the bones of breast of mutton and ox-cheek, with rice boiled in it. Then Sunday, a small joint again, and so on.' If we have a leg of mutton on Sunday, which we do sometimes for a great treat, then that lasts us all the week with a little management."

"Well, I hope I shall get on," answered Susan; "but it seems altogether different-like to the way we've managed at home."

"Or not managed, rather," said Millicent, smiling. "I daresay it has cost you as much in bread as it does me, for all we have, meat, and tea, and sugar, and all. What does your father earn when he is in work?"

"I think thirty shillings a-week, and there's four of us and father."

"Well, Susan, you might all live and pay rent and schooling for two-and-twenty shillings a-week, and your father might have a little beer, and the children milk for that money. I hope after you have been here a little while, you will be able to manage a house capitally, and teach them at home to get on better. And early rising is one great help. Depend on it, Susan, nothing can be well done if the morning hours—the best hours in the day—are wasted."

"Have you most come to the end of your sermon, Milly? for if Susan ain't tired, I know who is."

"Yes; I've finished for this morning," said Millicent, good-humouredly; "but you know I must get my hand in at teaching."

"Ah! true; never mind, Sukey, you only mix me a good glass of grog to-night, and I'll spin you a yarn which will beat all Milly's."

Susan, who enjoyed nothing more than Willie's stories, kept him to his word; and when Millicent was gone to the Vicarage, where she went to receive her final instructions, she mixed him his tumbler of grog, and sitting down with her work by his side, implored him to begin.

"Aunt! uncle! do make him!" she said.

"He don't want much making,—do you, Willie?" said his mother.

"No! I am ready and willing, mother, if so be it's agreeable to the company!"

"Oh, I am sure it is!" answered Susan, eagerly; and as the smiling faces of his old parents seemed to coincide with Susan's statement, he began.

"Well, in our first cruise we had a chap with us named Bob Spanks, a pretty smart sailor, and a good enough fellow in his way, but somehow no great favourite with any of us. However, the poor chap fell sick, and then, of course, we were all ready to lend a hand to do anything we could for him, for there's no knowing whose turn it might be next; and when



folks are sick, you know one ought to forget their faults. I used to do a great deal for him; for our good Milly had taught me lots of messes for illness in the doctoring, and cooking way, and his face used to brighten up whenever I came alongside of him; but he grew worse and worse, and we were then quite sure he had sailing orders for a longer voyage than he had ever been yet, and he would soon, poor fellow, be lying beneath the waters, which seemed already tolling his funeral bell. We used to take turns to sit up with him. Well, it came to my turn: he'd been much worse all day, and seemed towards night sinking as fast as the sun which we saw dropping down, as it were, into the sea. That evening we said one to the other, 'There'll be no sun to-morrow for poor Bob!'

"There's something in sickness and death at sea that's more sad and awful than you landsmen have a notion of; and as I sat with him that night I thought so. It was very fine and calm; but the plashing of the water had a mournful sound, like, as I said before, a funeral bell, as I sat there, and could hear nothing else but his hard breathing. I'd just given him a drink of barley-water, which I made for him as Milly had taught me, and which he liked better than anything, and sat down again; and as he seemed going to sleep, I thought I'd just shut my eyes a bit,—when

presently I saw him raise himself up in the hammock and then quietly get out of it. I was too thunder-struck to move or speak, for for days he hadn't stirred without help; but he got out and walked past me; I spoke to him, but he made no answer! I got up to follow or lay hold of him; but, judge my astonishment when I could not see him,—and on looking in the hammock, there he lay! 'Well,' thought I, 'this is a rum start! I must have been asleep!' so I sat down again, but I can tell you I did not much like it. Well, to shorten my yarn, I'll tell you at once this happened three times! twice more I saw that dying chap get out and walk slowly past me,—and each time I still saw the figure in the hammock. The third time I went up to the hammock,—though I'll own my heart was going pretty fast!—and there lay the poor chap stone dead and cold!"

"Oh! my goodness, Willie; what a horrid story!" said poor little Susan, looking quite pale and aghast; "did Millicent ever hear that?"

"No, I think not; and that's a good ghost-story, eh, mother?"

"I can't say I much like such tales, my boy," answered his mother; "I never knew justly how to believe 'em."

"Well, they say, seeing's believing, and I saw

that. Father's asleep, we can't ask him what he thinks; but, just to brighten up Sukey there, who looks as frightened as if she'd seen a ghost herself, I'll tell you what the Chaplain said, who went on the next cruise with us. I was telling him about it—for you may guess it was pretty often in my mind—and he said, I shall never forget his words, 'My good fellow, it was nothing but a dream,—you neither woke, nor spoke, nor moved, you may depend on it,—you fell into a troubled sleep, with your mind full of the poor sick fellow you were nursing, and then had this kind of nightmare about him. Of course, it is not for us poor weak creatures to say what is or what is not possible, we know that everything is possible to God; but I think His messengers take charge of the souls He sends for, and that He does not permit them to visit this earth again until the final trump shall bid the dead appear!' I learnt his words by heart, for I thought it was good to remember them to tell others when they got terrified with such notions. I've never believed in ghosts since, for I've felt sure that the stories we've heard have been, like mine, dreams."

Millicent had been during this time busy with Mrs. Ponsonby, arranging what was to be done on the first day. She said she perfectly remembered the mode of teaching where she was at school, and

thought with the little hints Mrs. Ponsonby had given her, she could apply it to the present system, although she should certainly feel a little nervous at first.

"But you will soon fall into it, I'm sure," said Mrs. Ponsonby; "I shall not come down the first day, but Mr. Ponsonby will come to open it and read prayers; and then, as soon as morning school is over, I should like to see you and hear how you have got on."

And the eventful day arrived. Before nine Mr. Ponsonby and Millicent were both in the schoolroom anxiously awaiting the arrival of the scholars; at a few minutes after, four girls made their appearance, and as there seemed to be no more arriving, Mr. Ponsonby ordered the door to be closed, and read a prayer for God's blessing on the undertaking before the ordinary school-prayer. This duty ended, he addressed them in a few words on the object of the school, and saying, he trusted soon to see a much better attendance, he left them, and Millicent to proceed without the constraint of his presence.

After school, according to her promise, she went to the Vicarage.

"O Millicent!" said Mrs. Ponsonby, as soon as she saw her, "how very few: I am so disappointed!"

"I scarcely expected more, ma'am; they won't come until it gets a name,—till they can talk of it amongst themselves."

"But six promised to come."

"They sent messages, ma'am. Betsy Hind had gone to take care of the baby at the inn, and Susan Baker's mother was washing and couldn't spare her," said Millicent, smiling. "There will be such excuses as that at first, and indeed, more or less, always; but after the first quarter, when they find that regular attendance and good conduct are rewarded, we shall see an improvement, I dare say."

"And how did you find you got on with these few?"

"Oh, very tolerably for a beginning, I think, ma'am!"

"May I come and see to-morrow?"

"Certainly, if you like, ma'am; it will be work this afternoon."

"Oh, yes, of course, I would rather come in the morning."

"I think it likely one or two more will be there, ma'am, for it will be very much talked of to-day!"

"Well, we shall see; I hope so. Good day, Millicent; I am going for a drive, and you, I dare say, want to get home."

## CHAPTER X.

**"Do good for good's own sake, looking not to worthiness nor love."—**  
*Proverbial Philosophy.*

THE next morning the two other girls came, and with her small school of six, Millicent set earnestly to work. In the course of the morning Mrs. Ponsonby arrived, and was soon quite satisfied that Millicent knew what she was doing, and would carry on the school as she wished. On the blackboard was written the subject of instruction for the day: it was on Dress. The girls had each slates, and were to write on them the answers to the questions Millicent gave out. The question she first asked was the material of which their frocks were made.

They all wrote, Cotton.

"Well, then, I daresay you will be very much astonished when I tell you that your frocks all grew."

The children looked at each other and laughed.

"That sounds very funny, doesn't it?" continued

Millicent. "But it is quite true. Now tell me the difference between linen and cotton."

The answer to this varied,—some wrote, "One is white, the other coloured." Others,—“Cotton is cheaper than linen.” One girl, who had a duller and more stupid look than any of them, wrote, “There ain’t no difference.”

“None of these answers will do,” said Millicent, “and yours, Maria, is bad grammar as well. Copy what I write on the board.

“‘Cotton is a plant growing in both the Old World and the New, but the largest quantity is grown in the United States. The fibres are picked and spun into long threads, and then woven into the material you wear. Cotton thread, such as you sew with, is made by two yarns of equal quality being twisted together.’

“Write that first,” said Millicent, “and I will then tell you about linen.”

As soon as they had done this she wrote on the board,—

“‘Linen is the fibre of a plant called Flax; the fibre is spun into yarn or thread, and made into the material we use.’”

When the children had written this, Millicent, after explaining to them the meaning of the words, “fibre,” “yarn,” &c., proceeded to questions on Flannel, and told them the flannel they wore once

kept the sheep warm; which caused another laugh from the children.

"You laughed when I told you your dresses once grew," said Millicent; "but, you see, I was not far wrong: the stuff that made them grew. Now copy what I write:

"'Flannel is made from the wool of sheep; there are two kinds of wool,—short and long,—and the two stuffs called woollen and worsted are so called according to the wool used.'"

After they had written this, they had to set down all the different kinds of materials they could remember made from wool, and seemed much amused by the number of articles of clothing the sheep provided for them.

"Now there is something besides clothing that we get from wool,—something which is a great comfort to us in the winter; try all, and think of it; and, remember, before we finish school this morning, I shall expect you to write out the answers I have told you, from memory; those who don't will have to be kept in after school to write it."

This produced rather blank looks, but Millicent continued,—

"This is not for a punishment, recollect, but to remind you that you must be attentive, and try to recollect what you are taught; for if you do not,



you are only wasting your own time and your parents' money by coming here. Now, all try and think what other useful and comfortable article is made of wool."

Millicent waited a little while, but no slates were shown up.

"Come," she said, "can none of you tell me? You have all got one, at the very least, in your houses, I should think; something warm and valuable in winter, but that you are very glad to put aside in the summer?"

"Fire," suggested the stupid-looking girl aforesaid. This, of course, elicited a hearty laugh from the others.

"Gently, gently!" said Millicent; "you must not laugh at one another's mistakes, you may all make equally silly ones. But now, Maria, if you had stopped really to think, you would not have said anything so silly; how can fire be made of wool? Now look at the board,—

"Blankets are made of wool; the best come from Witney, in Oxfordshire."

When they had written this, Millicent desired them to clean their slates, and write what had been told them about cotton, linen, and wool; this, with the corrections which had to be made in the spelling, occupied them until a quarter to twelve, when the slates were put away, the grace said, and the girls dismissed. When they were

all gone, Mrs. Ponsonby, who had been a quiet but most interested spectator of the scene, told Millicent that she was quite satisfied with her method, but she should have thought the questions too easy.

“But, you see, they did not know them, ma’am; as I perfect them in such simple things as these, I shall go on more deeply into the subject, when I shall use some of the nice books you have provided me with; but at present they want to be taught to think and to answer in their own words, and from their own ideas. Yesterday I asked Maria what milk was for, and she said to be thrown away.”

“Is it possible? I scarcely believed in such ignorance: then your lesson was on Food yesterday.”

“Yes, ma’am; and as they seemed very ignorant on that subject, I thought I would have it again to-morrow; and in the afternoon I cross-question them on what they have learnt in the morning, and by that means I hope to make them recollect it.”

“Well, then, if you have fresh girls next week, they will have lost all this.”

“No, ma’am; I shall give the same questions to them, and make these girls write the answers on the board as I did for them.”

“Oh, yes, I see! And what did you say is your subject for to-morrow?”

“Food again; and the next day, Cookery; and

Friday Arithmetic and Book-keeping in the morning, and Household-work in the afternoon, instead of Needle-work."

"I think that will do very nicely,—the writing and spelling are kept up by this plan of copying from the board, and the reading, by the lessons read morning and evening. Of course you are particular about the reading!"

"Yes, I have the verse read again for the smallest mistake; and if the mistake is repeated, the girl has to write the verse out after school."

"That is a very good plan."

"I thought, ma'am, if Mr. Ponsonby would, after a short time, give a lecture on ventilation and drainage as connected with the health and comfort of cottage homes, it would be a good thing."

"I think he has been arranging some lecture of that kind, but it must not be until there are more scholars."

"Oh, no! certainly not; but the sooner the better, don't you think, ma'am? for I fancy it will make the people think more of the school."

"It shall be done as soon as possible."

They talked for some little time longer on the school business, and then took leave of each other. Millicent, on her way home, called on the Wards, and found them more tidy and decent than she had ever

seen them. Mrs. Ward told her she thought she was learning some of her ways, and found them better than her own.

"I've been taking to cooking lately, and I'm sure I don't spend so much; and my man is in better humour,—and see how nice baby gets on! She hasn't had no messes since that night you came." And, going to the cradle, she turned back the coverlet, and displayed a baby that Millicent could scarcely recognise as the poor little misery she was called to doctor.

"Well, you have done well, Mrs. Ward; your baby is a credit to you! Pretty darling, how well it looks!" and Millicent bent down and kissed the little warm cheek.

"I find now," said Mrs. Ward, "that warmth is a great deal to her. I keep her very warm, and never give her any thick food, and she's been thriving ever since."

"You may depend on it that is right, and I'm very pleased to see the good effect of my advice; but it is not every one who will take advice."

"That's true enough! I went into my neighbour, who was confined a day or two back, and she'd been giving of that poor baby *nine* different things, 'cause it licked its lips, and the nurse said it wanted something, and that it would not thrive nor be easy till they gave it the right thing. Dear! how that was a screaming,

to be sure ! It had had jam,—and oh,—there I can't tell you what ! but I counted nine different things ! I says, Take and suckle it, poor creature, or else give it some milk and water and sugar ; and I told 'em how to make it—like you told me—but I couldn't get 'em to hear reason, and so I came away, and they were making it pap then."

"Yes ; it is very strange that people haven't common sense in the management of their babies ; but, certainly, I find they use it less—as far as their children are concerned—than any other way. Won't you send your eldest girl to my school to be taught common-sense ?" said Millicent, laughing.

"Well, I think I must. I heard you were school-mistress,—there's a deal said about it, I can tell you !"

"That I quite expected," answered Millicent ; ~~but~~ that's a nine days' wonder, and will die a natural death. I only hope the school will flourish."

"Well, if you can make them as clever as yourself, you'll do a great deal !"

"Then you'll send your girl and let me try ?"

"Yes, I will, on Monday. I must say I should like her to learn to be handy, and needlework 'specially, for I never was no hand at it myself, and I'm always finding the ill-convenience of it. You teach work, of course ?"

"Oh, yes ! every afternoon but Friday. Monday,

they learn cutting out and making new things; Tuesday, darning; Wednesday, marking, and stitching, and button-hole stitch; and Thursday, mending. And I shall be obliged to you, and all the mothers, to send any old clothes for the children to put to rights; it will teach them, and be of service to you."

"Well, true, so it will! Then I'll look 'em up;—for the matter of that I shall have less trouble to find old than new clothes!"

"Well, we will make them look like new; two of your children go to the National School, don't they?" said Millicent.

"Yes; Mrs. Ponsonby is so good as to pay for them."

"I'm glad of it. Poor little creatures! learning is better than house and lands, you know, Mrs. Ward; but I must run away now, or I shall not get my dinner and be back in time for afternoon school. Good day, Mrs. Ward."

And in the afternoon Millicent returned to her post, and she and her six girls were worth seeing in their comfortable schoolroom, their busy fingers plying their tasks, and Millicent's kind, good-humoured face brightening the very room as she sat amongst them; encouraging them when they did well, and consoling them when they did not, with the assurance that they would soon do better making the time pass so quickly

by the stories she would tell them in her pleasant voice, to illustrate some instruction she had been giving in the morning, or teach some moral lesson, thus impressing it on their memory in a manner which they never forgot; but even in after years, when that pleasant voice was hushed for ever, they could still recall its tones in the schoolroom at Wetherby and the instruction it imparted,—and so the time went on. The next week, to Mrs. Ponsonby's delight, the number of scholars was doubled, and she felt that the bark she had freighted with so much care was safely launched, and would go on its voyage bravely; and both she and her husband thought Millicent most admirably adapted for the purpose, and considered themselves very lucky in having found such a person.

## CHAPTER XI.

"A babe in a house is a well-spring of pleasure, a messenger of peace and love :

A resting-place for innocence on earth ; a link between angels and men :

Yet is it a talent of trust, a loan to be rendered back with interest ;  
A delight, but redolent of care ; honey-sweet, but lacking not the bitter."—*Proverbial Philosophy.*

"EDWARD, dear," said Mrs. Ponsonby, some few days after the opening of the school, "you should go in the afternoon to hear Millicent's stories ; she does tell the children such innocent ones. I assure you, it amuses me as much as them. Let us go this afternoon ; shall we ?"

"Yes, if you like, dear."

So the Bath chair was ordered round after luncheon and they proceeded to the school. They were in good time, the work was being given out, and so the stories had not commenced.

Millicent seemed rather unwilling to tell one before the visitors ; but Mrs. Ponsonby whispered to her



to go on, for she liked so much to hear her, that after a little hesitation she began the following tale,—certainly, as Mrs. Ponsonby termed it, “innocent,” but suited to the capacities of her hearers, whose faces brightened the moment she commenced.

“There was once on a time a little girl, who was so idle—so very idle—that she liked to do nothing but eat, drink, and enjoy herself, and never to be troubled by doing anything for anybody. One day she turned very cross and sulky, because her mother asked her to take care of the little baby whilst she was washing, rock the cradle, and try to keep it asleep, or quiet, and amused. She did this with such a bad grace, that her mother felt quite worried at having asked her, and hurried through her work to relieve the child of the occupation she seemed so much to dislike. As soon as she was at liberty, in a very sulky humour she went out and sauntered down the lanes until she came to a corn-field.

“‘Ah, pretty corn,’ she said, ‘I wish I was you; you’ve nothing to do for any one—nothing but to wave your pretty heads in the summer sunshine!’

“‘I beg your pardon, little miss,’ said a voice, ‘it has a great deal to do for you and every one, you could not live without its help; it goes through a great deal for you; it is cut, and thrashed, and ground, and baked, to give you nourishing food; but for a very

short time is it left here idly to wave in the summer breeze and sunshine.'

"She felt a little abashed by this, and went on a little farther till she came to a field of flax.

" 'Well,' she said, 'these pretty flowers are not like the silly corn; they do nothing but put forth their pretty blossoms, and have the bees and butterflies to play with.'

"Again the voice answered,—

" 'Wrong again, little girl, those pretty flowers are very useful, their stalks are picked and spun, and wove into the clothes you wear; and their seeds make an oil, which our planters and manufacturers could not well do without.'

"She made no answer; but, looking still more ashamed, went on again till she came to a flock of sheep, and then she said,—

" 'Well, I wish I was a happy little sheep, there grazing so idly in the meadow; that does nothing but enjoy itself.'

" 'Silly little girl!' said the voice; 'why that sheep is killed for your support and nourishment, and its wool taken from its back to make the winter clothes and blankets, which keep you so warm and comfortable.'

"The little girl stamped her foot quite in a pet;

but, determined to find something she should like to be, which led an idle, happy life, she began to grope in the hedges, and there she found some lovely flowers white and purple, and some of them with scarlet berries.

“ ‘ Now I have found some happy things,’ she said, ‘ who have nothing to do but to blossom and to sun themselves, and to play with the birds and insects which fly about them.’

“ ‘ Quite wrong,’ replied the voice again; ‘ those flowers play a very useful part—a very nice one, too—for they soothe and comfort the sufferer, and give rest to the sleepless. The doctors gather them to make into draughts, to give to those in pain. Little girl, go home, and learn from all things in nature that the good God who made it all meant everything to be useful, and nothing, and no person, to be idle and useless. The fig-tree was cut down because it bore no fruit, and cumbered the ground. Go home at once, and, child as you are, be useful and industrious, do the work that is ordered for you, and then you will look bright and happy like the flowers you admire, and the little animals you envy, whose purpose it is to do, as you must strive to do, the will of their Father which is in heaven.’ ”

The story ended, Mr. and Mrs. Ponsonby left,

after, in a low voice, complimenting Millicent on her talent; and Millicent ordered the work to be brought to her for correction.

"Maria," she said to one girl, "I am afraid you have been listening to my story, but not working; you have scarcely done a stitch. You must now stay in to finish your task, and if this occurs again I shall expect you to write the story out from memory after morning school."

The other girls had got on very nicely, and so Millicent promised one more story, and began as follows:—

"Little Mark Stavely was the only child of a widowed mother, living in a narrow street in an old Cathedral city. Now, perhaps, you do not know what a cathedral is? it is a grand and splendid church, which people built many, many years ago for the worship of God; and because they thought nothing could be too beautiful or costly to be honoured with the name of God's house, they spent enormous sums of money on these splendid buildings; and they stand now in a great many cities of England to remind us that our forefathers thought, with good King David, it was not well to give to God of 'that which cost them nothing.' Well, near one of these beautiful cathedrals little Mark Stavely lived, as I have said, with his mother. He was a quiet, strange sort of

child, thoughtful beyond his years,—maybe because he was not very strong in health, or that the recollection of his father's death, which had occurred within his memory, had saddened him. He perfectly remembered his father's long and painful illness, and how, the night he died, he had taken his child's little hand in his and said,—

“‘Take care of your mother, my boy, and work for her when you are old enough.’

“These words he would not forget, and when he saw his poor mother's sad, tearful face he longed to be old enough to work for her, and thought that time would never come; but still he thought he could take care of her, and so, day by day, and hour by hour, refusing all invitations to play or take long rambles with his little neighbours, the patient child stayed by his mother, trying to help her in her household duties, and amuse her in his innocent way.

“You may imagine how much she loved the child, and how she strove to repay him for his love to her. She could not afford to send him to school, but she taught him carefully all she knew herself, and used never to miss taking him to the cathedral services, that he might learn to love and worship faithfully the God whom she told him watched over them both. In the long evenings she

used to tell him stories, or sing him little songs, while she worked. And on Sunday evenings, after service, they wandered together, this quiet mother and her pale boy, out into the fields, to watch the sun go down, and the stars shine forth; and she would tell him then how much we owed our Father in heaven, who made all this glory, and how, in light much greater than the sun, and beauty far more glorious, He lived, and had there to dwell with him the earthly father they had lost.

“One day a good clergyman, who often came to see them, and had been very kind to them ever since his father’s death, came to pay one of his usual visits. While he was there little Mark used to steal away into a corner and be very quiet, because he knew that the gentleman was talking and reading to his mother. He could seldom hear what was said, but this day he did overhear a sentence or two: he heard his mother say,—

“‘I trust he will when he is old enough, sir.’ And the clergyman answered,—

“‘Even now he can: the youngest child that possesses sense and speech can serve God. Teach your son that there are hundreds of little acts which a child can do that will be accepted and blessed to him, if they be only done really to serve God.’

“Mark heard no more, but the words haunted him over and over again. He said them to himself,

and wondered how a child like him could serve that great and glorious Being, who had 'His dwelling so high.'

"His mother was very busy the next day washing, so, as he could not help her, he went out for a little walk, still thinking of the words he had heard,—still wondering how he could serve God.

"He bent his steps towards the Cathedral, as he always did when alone, for it filled his childish mind with awe and wonder, that grand building,—and the thought of the many, many years ago it had been built; and he used to love to wander about amongst the cloisters, and try to read the inscriptions on the tombs, and note the curious dresses of the figures which were often on them. The service was just concluding as he drew near, and soon the people began to come out, and he stood and watched them. 'Perhaps,' he thought, 'those little choir boys serve God: they are daily in His house, singing His praises. If I was one of them, now; but I cannot sing, and don't know who to ask to teach me. Here they come, with their white dresses.'

And, as he was thinking this, they ran past him, those little children who had just been singing praise to God, and he heard them utter words which made him shudder, as he remembered that they were breaking the third commandment, even before they were well out of the holy place. Surely, then, they could

not be really serving God,—it was with their lips, and not with their lives,—for scarcely had the lingering echo died away amongst the aisles of the Psalm they had been chanting,—‘For I love thy commandments above gold and precious stones.’

“Presently he noticed a man standing as though he was waiting for some one. Mark drew a little nearer to him, and the man turned sharply round, and said,—

“‘Is that Mary?’

“‘My name is Mark Stavely,’ answered the boy.

“‘Oh! a boy, is it? I beg your pardon, my lad; I am blind.’ And Mark looked up then, and saw that the large grey eyes were fixed and sightless.

“‘You do not see a little girl about anywhere, do you?’ he asked.

“‘No, sir, nowhere.’

“‘Then I must find my way back by myself, as I came, I suppose;’ and with a weary sigh the poor man moved on. Mark hesitated a moment, and then ran after him.

“‘Please, sir, I will go with you, and help you, if you will let me.’

“‘Will you?’ he said eagerly; ‘but I’ve no money to pay you.’

“‘I don’t care for that, sir. I don’t want to be paid. But to help you if I can.’



“ ‘ Good child ! come ; there, give me your hand.’

“ Mark put his little hand in the poor man’s, and led him carefully along.

“ ‘ I have been blind,’ he said, ‘ for this two years from an accident, and unable to earn my bread, so some kind friends placed me in the almshouses. My greatest pleasure is to come to this beautiful Cathedral service. The first time I tried to come by myself, and managed to reach there pretty well by the sound of the bell ; but I had great difficulty to get back again. However, I tried again the next day, and as I was coming out of the Cathedral, a sweet little voice said to me, ‘ Poor ’blind man, may I lead you home?’ And I felt a soft, warm little hand put into mine. Very gladly I consented, as you may think. And until to-day never has that sweet child missed coming to fetch me, and lead me to and from the Cathedral. I am quite uneasy about her ; I fear she is ill. If it would not be too much trouble, I would ask you to lead me to her home. It is No. 10 George Street.’

“ ‘ That I will,’ said Mark, readily ; ‘ that is the same street I live in.’

“ So he carefully led the poor man to the house where the little girl lived. They knocked gently, and they were answered by a rough-looking woman, who said, ‘ The child was not ill ; but she was quite sick of her going to and fro to the Cathedral and doing

nothing to keep herself, so she had ordered her to stop at home and help her wash.' She then shut the door rudely in their faces, and would say no more.

" 'Well, I must go home then now,' said the poor man. 'I won't bring you all the way, my boy. I think I can find it; it is not far from here.'

" 'But there's a crossing,' said little Mark; 'you had better let me come. I'm not a bit tired, and I should like to come.'

" So he took the poor man safe to the almshouses.

" 'Thank you, my boy,' he said. 'God will bless you for this and every good act you do in His name and for His poor.'

" How happy Mark went home! Was not this serving God? Would the clergyman think so, he wondered. He told his mother directly what he had done, and she said it was quite right, and that he might go every day to help the poor man until he was old enough to go to work. And so he did, until at length his regular attendance and his good behaviour at service excited the attention of the precentor, and he stopped him, and asked him if he would like to learn to sing and be one of the choristers. Mark said, he should indeed, very much; so his mother was consulted, and consented; and soon Mark Stavely was numbered amongst the choristers, and sat there in his white surplice, his loud clear voice singing God's

praises with his lips and echoing them in his heart. He led the poor blind man to and fro, though, just the same, and tears of pleasure flowed from those poor sightless eyes the first time Mark's sweet voice was heard amongst the choir. But they did not either of them forget the little girl who had first performed this charitable office. Mark often met her and talked to her, till they grew quite old friends; and when she, after some time, went to a situation, Mark used to write to her, and tell her how their poor blind friend got on.

"Thus, you see," said Millicent, in conclusion, "that the smallest child among you can, by some kind act of charity to a poor neighbour, have the happiness of serving God and receiving His blessing. Never think you are too young for this. As the clergyman told Mrs. Stavely, 'The youngest child that possesses sense and speech can serve God, if they really do all, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God.' Now can any of you tell me in what other way Mark obeyed God's laws besides this one act of Christian kindness?" asked Millicent.

"Sang in church," suggested one child.

"I do not know that there is any commandment which orders that, Jane. Think again. Did I not tell you that he loved his mother, and obeyed her, and

endeavoured to help her, and amuse her, and would rather do this than play?"

Many voices then readily answered, "Kept the fifth commandment."

"That is right. I hope you will not forget this little story. But remember, that young as you are, you can keep God's commandments if you strive earnestly to do so, and that they are meant to be the rule of life for young and old, rich and poor. It is time now to finish work for to-day. Maria, collect it."

The girl addressed rose and collected the work and put it away in a drawer, after Millicent had overlooked it. She then praised Maria for having worked very well during the last story, and read prayers, when the children departed to their several homes, full of the stories Millicent had related to them.

The school was evidently gaining in popularity, though there had been much gossiping and ill-nature about Millicent.

"Who was she to be so stuck up?" said one.

"I'm sure my girl won't be taught by her," said another. "It's no use my sending her."

But soon the few who did go took such favourable reports home of the pleasant room at school, and the parents were so pleased with the old rags, as they had thought them, made almost new by Millicent's clever

instruction, that the ill-natured remarks grew less frequent, and mothers made efforts to spare their children to this admirable school.

A few days afterwards, a new interest sprung up at the Vicarage, more engrossing even than the school. A little sunbeam, in the shape of a tiny baby, lighted their home and gladdened their hearts; and with her little treasure beside her, and her hand clasped in her husband's, Edith Ponsonby looked and felt entirely happy.

## CHAPTER XII.

"All yet seems well ; and if it end so meet,  
The bitter past, more welcome is the sweet."

*All's Well that Ends Well.*

AND now the wedding-day was close at hand : but one more evening would Millicent's bright face be beneath her parents' roof, henceforth she would be a visitor there ; it would be no longer home ; but there was no sadness to Millicent in this thought : she loved her parents dearly, she had proved it by her devotion to them, by the happy home her care had made for them, and she was going forth with their blessing to make another home happy,—her husband's home,—that being for whom she was willing to forsake "all others, and cleave only unto him." Nothing but happiness,—a calm, intense happiness,—shone out of her clear eyes that evening. And Susan was so busy, and so happy, —looking forward to the morrow as a great event

in her life,—she was to be bridesmaid; and Millicent had given her a pretty cotton dress, with a cloak like it, and a straw bonnet, trimmed with white, to wear; she had never remembered having so many new things all at once. And Philip had made his bride a present of her dress,—a pretty grey silk, with a white shawl, and white bonnet, and Mrs. Ponsonby had provided an excellent dinner for them, wine and all, and given the bride half-a-dozen silver forks and half-a-dozen tea-spoons, and Willie had given them a neat china tea service, for he said there was nothing Milly loved so much as tea, except Philip. And all these presents were being discussed and talked over on this evening. Millicent would have liked to ask the Aldhams to the wedding, but she thought it would be too painful for poor Mary, who had never smiled since the day of her sad loss, but, by Mrs. Ponsonby's care and kindness, they wanted for nothing.

And the day dawned bright and clear, with a slight frost, which when the sun shone forth hung every leaf and spray with sparkling gems.

The St. Michael's School children had of course a holiday, and Millicent begged that the National School might have one also; so they all stood to watch the bridal party as it came along, and give one hearty cheer for the bride. The church was

full of spectators,—Millicent had been their friend so long,—the sick she had tended, the sorrowful she had soothed, the weary she had helped, the hungry she had fed, were there, to join in praying that the Lord would mercifully with his favour look upon her.

Very impressively Mr. Ponsonby read the service, and very kindly did he shake hands with the bride and bridegroom afterwards, and wish them all happiness.

“You’ve got an excellent wife now, Hartley; take care of her, and let me see that you value such a blessing.”

“I’ll try to, sir; depend on it.”

“I’ve no advice to give you, Millicent—Mrs. Hartley,” he said, smiling, “but to go on as you have done, leading a useful life: it has become more concentrated now, but a good daughter never failed to make a good wife; and I only hope that your instruction, and, still better, your example, will make the little ones confided to your care, in due course of time, as great blessings to their husbands as you will be to yours. But, hark! that joyous sound seems to say an end to preaching,” he said, as the church-bells struck up a merry peal, “so God bless you both!” and shaking hands again heartily with



them, he dismissed them, and they left the church slowly and reverently, their hearts too full for many words.

Mrs. Ponsonby was most anxiously awaiting her husband's return, to hear all about the wedding,—she had been lifted on to the sofa for the first time,—and in its little cot—all pink and white muslin—lay nestled the second treasure of her heart, her darling little girl.

“Well, my Edith,” said Mr. Ponsonby, as he softly entered her room, “not asleep?”

“No, dearest; I am only just up.”

“And longing to hear all about the wedding, I daresay?”

“That I am. How did she look?”

“Very nicely; and it all went off capitally. Let me see if I can tell you the dresses:—the bridesmaid had a blue muslin, or linen, or something of that kind, with a cloak like it, and a straw bonnet trimmed with white; and the bride had a light dove or grey silk, with a white shawl, and white bonnet, with myrtle in it, and a lace veil. There, now, I have been good, have I not, to remember all that?”

“You have, indeed, love. I heard the bells. I am glad they had a peal: it seems as though they had the Church's good wishes.”

At this moment a respectable-looking, elderly

woman came from an inner room, and said to Mr. Ponsonby,—

“You will be good enough to remember, sir, that this is Mrs. Ponsonby’s first day up, and there must not be too much talking.”

“Now, my good old nurse, I am very well, and you’ve no idea how much my tongue wants exercise.”

“Yes, my dear, but you will not keep very well if you get over tired; I am only giving a warning.”

“Quite right, nurse,” said Mr. Ponsonby; “I will not over-fatigue her, depend on it; but will that small thing never open its eyes? I have not seen the colour of them yet.”

“We like her to sleep, sir; and I don’t see why you call her small: I think her a very fine baby.”

“Of course you do, nurse, and so she is, I daresay; but, remember, I am not learned yet in babies; and have you, darling,” continued Mr. Ponsonby, turning to his wife, “settled on her name yet?”

“Yes, if you don’t object, I should like it named after dear mamma,—Evelyn.”

“I have not the slightest objection, dearest; and shall be delighted when I have the pleasure of calling her so.”

And the days rolled on, and Edith’s strength returned, and the little baby grew and flourished, and then was taken to the church and enrolled amongst

its members, to be Christ's faithful soldier and servant. And now Edith could walk about a little better than she could before that little bright being had come to gladden her; and she was able to carry it round the garden, and she felt so proud of that achievement, and spoke with a happy look and tone of *her* baby, as though no one ever had one before,—or at any rate, such a one as hers.

And soon the baby was taken down to the school for Millicent to see,—Millicent, in her pretty home, where she looked so happy and contented. The little sitting-room she had furnished so nicely and took such pride in it, and it was more than Philip dared to do—at least so he said—to leave anything in that room which ~~did~~ not lawfully belong to it.

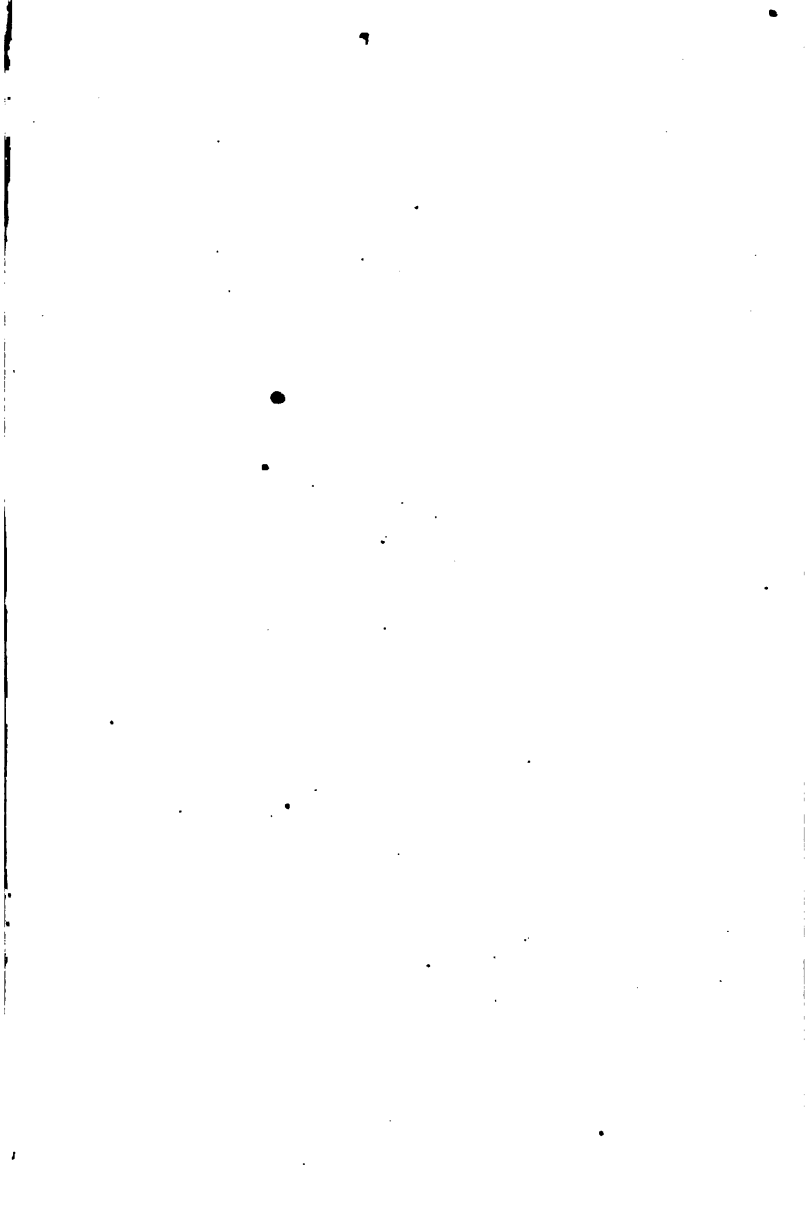
Edith Ponsonby could not be quite content till she had made the poor Aldhams thoroughly comfortable; and it now struck her that she could do so if they were inclined to agree to a proposition she was going to make them; she thought that Mary would make an excellent nursemaid for her baby, her manners and attainments being above the common order, and that Anne could be housemaid, for she was just parting with hers, and then the two sisters would not be separated. This proposal she made them as soon as she had consulted with her husband, and it was most readily agreed to by the two girls, for Mary thought occupa-

tion was the best thing for her. They were soon, therefore, installed in their respective situations; and the following Sunday, when after service Mary visited the spot of earth in the green churchyard so dear to her, she started with mingled surprise, pleasure, and emotion, when she found a plain stone slab marking it, with the name and date, and the words, "Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."—Eph. vi. 8.

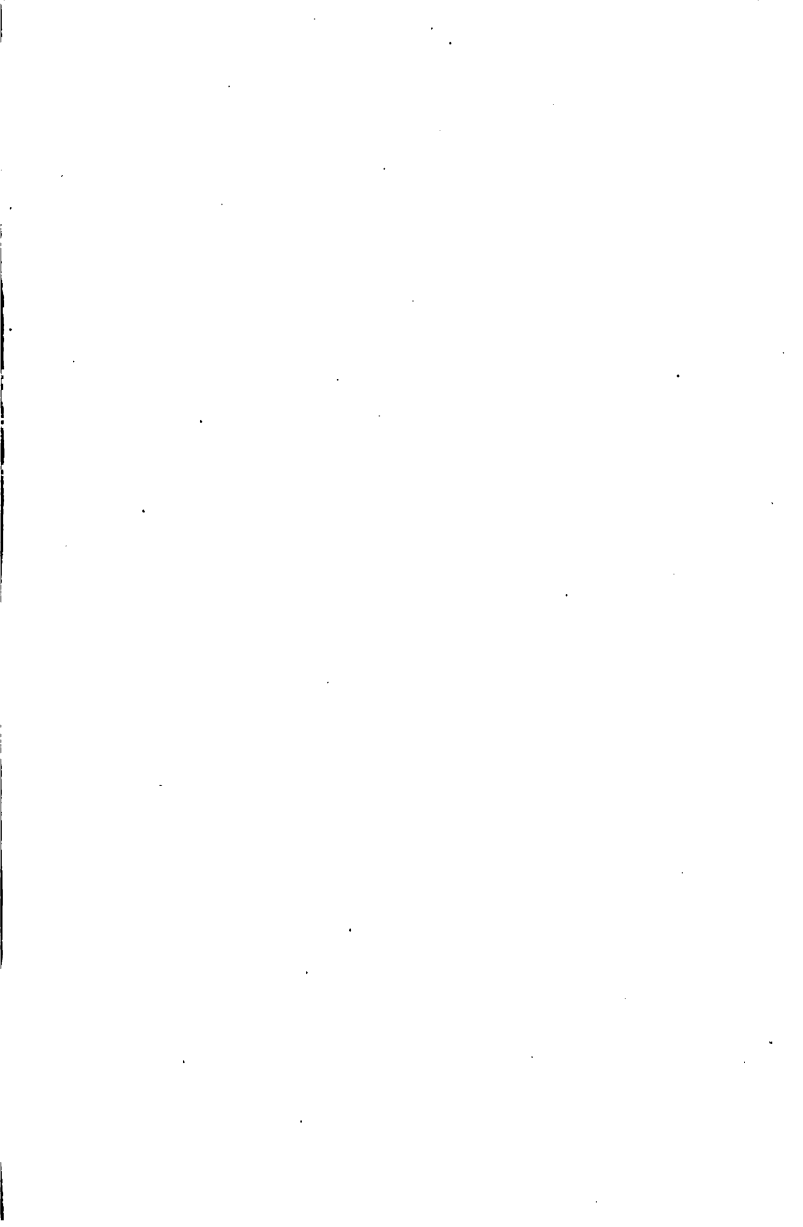
Willie's month of leave had expired, and he was again about to sail in the good ship *Isis*, bound for the West Indies. It was the first cloud that had passed over Millicent since Philip's return. But she loved Willie so dearly—her boy! as she used to call him—that she could not bear to part with him to follow his perilous profession, and other eyes besides Millicent's grew dim in the grey light of that dull morning on which he was to start. He had made Susan's new home very happy to her. His good-humour and never-failing good-nature, which made him put a bright side to everything, made her feel how very dull and tedious it would be when he was gone,—how very heavy the loads of water would be without Willie to help her carry them,—what hard work to fetch the wood, and how afraid she should be of the cow without Willie to stand by her head; but fruitless were all

such lamentations, Willie must go. But when his poor old parents clung sobbing about him, for they felt that it was probably a farewell for ever on this side of the grave; and his sister, with pallid face, held his hand as long as she could; poor little Susan could restrain her tears no longer, and her loud sobs were heard above the others. Willie turned suddenly round, and dropping his sister's hand, he clasped Susan's between both of his like a vice, and said,—

“Don't, don't, old girl, pipe your eye like that; I'm only going a bit of a cruise, and when I come home again, we'll sail in the same bark for the rest of our lives.” And finishing this oration with a kiss, which echoed through the room, he tore himself away, jumped up in the cart in which a neighbour had offered to drive him to the station, and performed a variety of extraordinary feats on the seat for as long as the loving, watching eyes could see him—till even through their tears they were fain to laugh.



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